ZATANNA™

by PAUL DINI

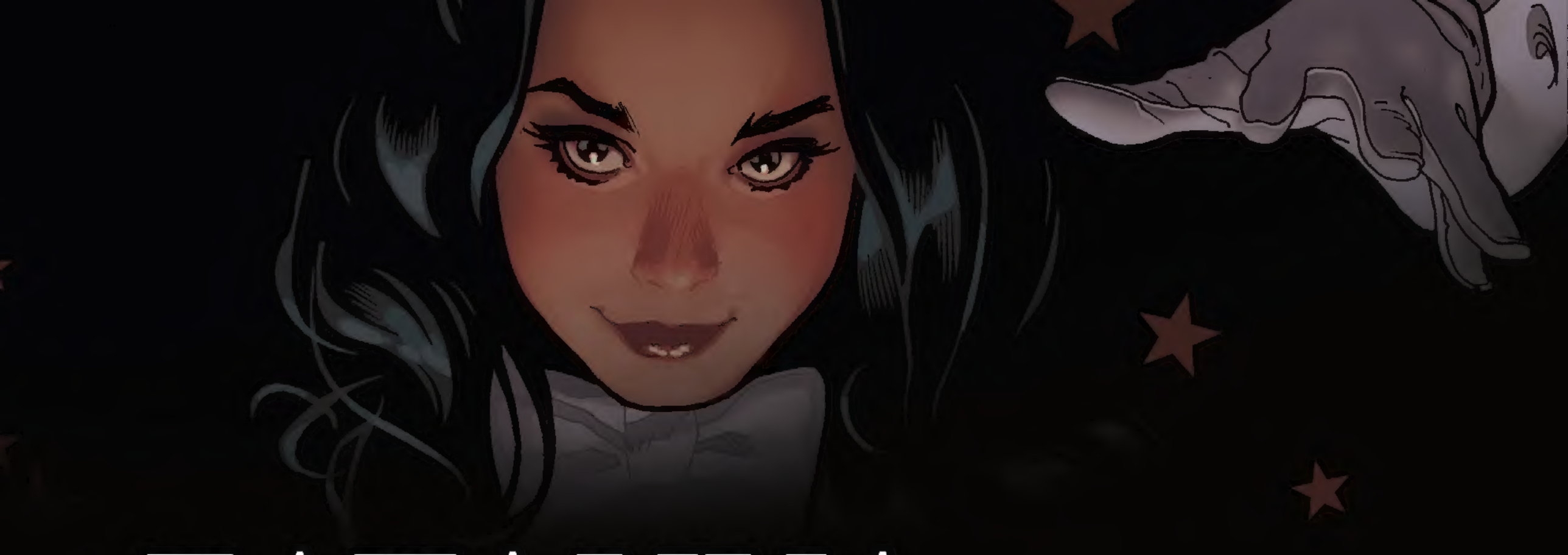
ADAM BEECHEN

STEPHANE ROUX

JAMAL IGLE

CHAD HARDIN

CLIFF CHIANG



ZATANNA

by PAUL DINI

PAUL DINI
ADAM BEECHEN | LILAH STURGES | DEREK FRIDOLFS
writers

STÉPHANE ROUX | JAMAL IGLE | CHAD HARDIN
CLIFF CHIANG | RICK MAYS | JESUS SAIZ
VICTOR IBÁÑEZ | WAYNE FAUCHER | JON SIBAL
KARL STORY | JOHN DELL | ROBIN RIGGS
TRAVIS MOORE | DUSTIN NGUYEN
artists

JOHN KALISZ | BRIAN MILLER | RICHARD & TANYA HORIE
EGO | DUSTIN NGUYEN | LOVERN KINDZIERSKI
colorists

PAT BROSSEAU | COMICRAFT
DAVE SHARPE | JOHN J. HILL
letterers

ADAM HUGHES
collection cover artist

ZATANNA created by GARDNER FOX
BROTHER NIGHT created by PAUL DINI

JOEY CAVALIERI | **SHELLY BOND** | **EDDIE BERGANZA** editors – original series
CHRIS CONROY associate editor – original series
KATE DURRÉ | **MARIAH HUEHNER** | **ADAM SCHLAGMAN** assistant editors – original series
ROBIN WILDMAN editor – collected edition
STEVE COOK design director – books
MONIQUE GRUSPE publication design
RYANE LYNN HILL production editor

MARIE JAVINS VP – Editor-in-Chief

JIM LEE President, Publisher & Chief Creative Officer
ANNE DePIES Senior VP & General Manager
LARRY BERRY VP – Brand Design & Creative Services
DON FALLETTI VP – Manufacturing & Production
LAWRENCE GANEM VP – Editorial Programming & Talent Strategy
ALISON GILL Senior VP – Manufacturing & Operations
NICK J. NAPOLITANO VP – Publishing & Business Operations
NANCY SPEARS VP – Sales & Marketing

ZATANNA BY PAUL DINI

Published by DC Comics. Compilation, cover and all new material Copyright © 2024 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. Originally published in single magazine form in ZATANNA 1-16, ZATANNA: EVERYDAY MAGIC, DC INFINITE HALLOWEEN SPECIAL 1 Copyright © 2003, 2007, 2010, 2011 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. All characters, their distinctive likenesses and related elements featured in this publication are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters and incidents featured in this publication are entirely fictional. DC Comics does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories or artwork.

DC Comics, 4000 Warner Blvd., Bldg. 700, 2nd Floor, Burbank, CA 91522.

Introduction by Paul Dini

When offered the chance to contribute the introduction to this collection of Zatanna stories, I had to fight the impulse to write the entire piece backwards. I realized that in addition to being time-consuming, such a stunt would come off as rather precious, with the only thing magically vanishing being the readers' patience. So, wanting to save Zatanna's many fans the bother of having to hold this page up to a mirror (a trick that doesn't really work anyway), I opted for this more straightforward and infinitely easier approach.

Er'uoy emoclew.

Okay, enough of that.

Magic is a tough business. I know this firsthand because, at this very minute, my wife, magician Misty Lee, is in our living room constructing glowing "icicles" that will be used to impale one of her plucky assistants in a big casino show this weekend. She has been working with saws, plastic tubing, paint and mini-lights for hours, and will probably put in a few more before bed. This is the nuts-and-bolts world of stage magic—practice, repeat, fix it when it breaks, practice, repeat, fix it again, repeat, curse when it breaks again, storm off in disgust, one more try, repeat, presto—success! How simple it would be if all that could be accomplished with a wave of a wand or a spell chanted in reverse.

Even a thaumaturge as powerful as Zatanna Zatara knows that wishing cannot make it so. As one of the preeminent mages of the DC Universe, Zatanna can strip an evil sorcerer of his power, turn an annoying rival into a sloth and still zap herself to the theater (in full hair and makeup yet) with plenty of time to dazzle the audience at her eight o'clock show. However, when it comes to daily life, she's just as mortal, and just as fallible, as the rest of us.

A magician who can work miracles is fascinating. A magician who can work miracles for everyone except herself is human. Sometimes painfully so. In our own lives, how often do we act as problem-solving "wizards" for friends, family and even complete strangers, only to find there's no magic left in the hat for us? That is a paradox our Zatanna knows all too well. Sure, she can save the world alongside the Justice League, but at the end of all too many days, she turns on the TV, cuddles up with her tiger and feeds the pigeons on her head just like any other single girl. There's no spell to resurrect a relationship gone south, no magic potion to heal a broken heart.

One of my favorite images of Zatanna is the cover by Brian Bolland that perfectly illustrates the schism between her two worlds. Outside the theater is a poster of the show-stopping enchantress at her most glamorous—confident, engaging and elegantly attired. In front of the

poster is the illusionist minus the illusion, dressed down in cap and old army jacket, slumping under a heavy costume bag, shaded eyes turned toward the reader with the "Not now, okay?" expression of a weary celebrity. Perhaps she's spent another long night fighting villains, or rehearsing, or playing den mother to her stage crew. Doesn't matter—in costume or out, Zatanna soldiers on, a woman of two worlds and a hero in both.

It was that mixture of the miraculous and the mundane that compelled me to tell stories about Gardner Fox's enchanting creation. During my tenure on the book, I was extremely grateful to be paired up with a wizard's cabal of incredible artists, including Rick Mays, Brian Miller, Stephane Roux, Chad Hardin, Wayne Faucher, Jesus Saiz, Cliff Chiang, Jamal Igle and Adam Hughes, who all worked their wizardry to bring the Mistress of Magic to life. The entire run of Zatanna's title would hardly be complete without the spellbinding tales of Adam Beechen, Matt Sturges and Derek Fridolfs, collected here for the first time.

I had a great time writing Zatanna, and hope to do so again. There are many questions still to be answered. Did Stringleshanks ever escape the Houdini milk can? How exactly did Zee's stage manager, Mikey, change from a slovenly dude into the reincarnation of a love goddess? Will Detective Colton be driven mad by revelations about his heritage? What about that big smackdown brewing between Zee and the Spectre? And, perhaps most important, is there an HMO plan on this or any other plane of reality that fully covers Dr. Bodie's therapy sessions?

Speculation will have to wait. Right now, the curtain is going up and the miraculous, mysterious and frequently mischievous Zatanna is ready to give you one hell of a show.

Yojne! (*Last time, I promise.*)

Paul Dini
December 1, 2016

VERTIGO

ROLLAND

EVERYDAY MAGIC

PAUL DINI
writer

RICK MAYS
artist

BRIAN MILLER
colorist

COMICRAFT
letterer

BRIAN BOLLAND
cover artist

CLUB BEWITCHED, HAIGHT ST., SAN FRANCISCO.

ROGEL! WHY DIDN'T YOU *TELL* ME THIS DISTINGUISHED GUEST WAS ONCE AGAIN IN OUR MIDST?

FORGIVE ME, MR. TANNARAK.

JOHN CONSTANTINE! IT'S BEEN *TOO* LONG.

NOT LONG *ENOUGH*, ACCORDING TO SOME.

NOW, JOHN, YOU *KNOW* THIS PLACE IS A MADHOUSE ON HALLOWEEN.

AND WITH EMOTIONS *ALREADY* RUNNING ON EDGE OVER THAT HUNTER BOY, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND HOW THINGS MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN A *BIT* OUT OF HAND.

A BIT.

A *PEACE* OFFERING. TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEAR OLD SINGLE MALT, THE *FINEST* IN THE CITY.

THANKS, BUT I'LL BE STICKING WITH THE GUINNESS I JUST BOUGHT.

SAME OLD JOHN. *STILL* SUSPICIOUS OF EVEN THE SMALLEST GIFTS NO MATTER HOW FREELY GIVEN.

SNAP

YOU NEVER GIVE ANYTHING FREELY, TANNARAK. BARRING, PERHAPS, *MISERY.*

EVEN THE BLOODY *PEANUTS* ARE CHARMED. THE MORE YOU EAT, THE MORE YOU CRAVE ALCOHOL, AND NOT 'COS OF THE SALT.

A MAN DOES WHAT HE CAN TO TURN A PROFIT. EVEN *I* HAVE OVERHEAD COSTS.

BUT *ENOUGH* OF MY WEARY AFFAIRS. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO BEWITCHED, IF I MAY ASK?

NO MYSTERY. I'M PASSING THROUGH TOWN AND TONIGHT IT SOMEHOW SEEMED THE PLACE TO BE.

AND IF YOU'RE BEGUILING YOUR EVENING *HERE*, I CAN ASSUME THAT A CERTAIN *FRIEND* YOU'D OTHERWISE BE CALLING ON MUST BE AWAY.

NO NEED TO ASSUME WHAT YOU FUCKIN' *KNOW*, TANNARAK.

THAT GIRL CREATES SO MANY RIPPLES THROUGH THE MYSTIC WORLD THAT EVERY LOCAL *SPOOK* KNOWS ABOUT IT WHEN SHE GOES TO THE *LOO.*

FRANKLY I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED A MORE *ROMANTIC* ALLUSION CONSIDERING YOUR PAST RELATIONSHIP, BUT YOUR ALLEGORY IS NOT WITHOUT MERIT.

SALUD.

PISS OFF.

YOU'RE RIGHT THOUGH. YOU CAN *FEEL* IT IN THE COLD, ANXIOUS FOG FROM THE BAY.

WHEN ZATANNA'S OUT OF TOWN, IT'S LIKE A *HOLE* IN THIS CITY'S *HEART.*

AND I *DARE* SAY, A HOLE IN MASTER CONSTANTINE'S HEART AS WELL.

FAR BE IT FROM *ME* TO STOOP TO A PURELY ALTRUISTIC GESTURE--

WHAT PART OF *"PISS OFF"* DID YOU NOT HEAR?

--BUT NOW THAT I HAVE ESTABLISHED, AT *SOME* LENGTH--

--THAT YOU ARE ALONE TONIGHT AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MISS ZATANNA IS *NOT* WHAT IT *WAS*...

JOHN CONSTANTINE, OF COURSE. I'VE HEARD OF YOU FROM A MUTUAL FRIEND.

I MIGHT DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE STUNNING YOUNG LADY--

--WHO HAS BEEN *DROOLING* OVER YOU ALL EVENING?

YOU MIGHT.

THANK YOU, MR....

CONSTANTINE.

A YOUNG LADY WITH A PENCHANT FOR FISHNETS AND TOP HATS, I'M GUESSING.

SHE HAD *MANY* NICE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT YOU.

AH WELL, THEN IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE SAME GIRL.

ZATANNA *WARNED* ME ABOUT THAT BITTER BRITISH WIT. SHE ALSO TOLD ME JOHN CONSTANTINE IS A GOOD MAN TO KNOW IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.

AND *NATURALLY* YOU WOULD BE THE ONE IN TROUBLE.

HI. I'M NIMUE.

SHE WHO SEDUCED MERLIN AND BOUND HIM PRISONER WITH HIS OWN ENCHANTMENTS.

I'M *NEITHER* THAT DANGEROUS NOR OLD. NIMUE'S MY NOM DU CLUB. FORGIVE A GOTH GIRL HER FANCIES.

ALWAYS. NOW WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME WHO'S MAKING LIFE *HARD* ON SUCH A CHARMING CREATURE?

THIS REALLY ISN'T A GOOD PLACE TO *TALK*. I CAN GO INTO GREATER DETAIL AT *MY* PLACE, IF YOU'VE GOT NO OTHER PLANS.

NONE MORE IMPORTANT THAN *YOU*, LUV.

"IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY, ARNIE, YOU *KNOW* IT'S NOT. THAT'S NEVER BEEN AN ISSUE."

HOLLISTER'S

ZATANNA
MISTRESS OF MAGIC
MAR. 26-30

CASINO

THANKS TO *ME*, YOUR ADORING PIT BULL OF AN AGENT.

RIGHT. BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT'S KIND OF *IRONIC*.

EVERY NIGHT I GO ON STAGE AND PERFORM THE MOST *AMAZING* MAGIC SHOW THAT ANYONE IN THIS OR ANY *OTHER* DIMENSION HAS EVER SEEN.

NOT JUST CARD AND ROPE TRICKS, BUT ACTUAL FEATS OF SORCERY. WHETHER OR NOT THE AUDIENCE *CHOOSES* TO BELIEVE WHAT THEY ARE SEEING IS BESIDE THE POINT. I'M OUT THERE CALLING DOWN THUNDER AND LIGHTNING, MAKING TIME RUN BACKWARD, TURNING THE OCCASIONAL HECKLER INTO A WARTHOG...

AND TO TAKE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING FROM TONY BENNETT, I THINK THAT'S PRETTY DARN *IMPRESSIVE*.

AGREED.

SO HOW COME TONY'S PULLING IN TWENTY GRAND *MORE* THAN ME AT THE HOTEL NEXT DOOR?

IT'S PURELY *NAME* RECOGNITION, Z'ANNA. THE TOURISTS ON GAMBLING JUNKETS ALL WANT TO SEE A STAR THEY KNOW.

NOT THAT YOU'RE *UNKNOWN* BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION, BUT TONY, HEY, THE MAN'S A *LEGEND*. THE SAN FRANCISCO SONG ALONE...

I KNOW, ARNIE. SORRY.

I ALWAYS OBSESS ON CLOSING NIGHT.

OH, AND HERE'S ONE OTHER ANAL POINT THAT'S BEEN BUGGING ME. COULD YOU *PLEASE* TELL THAT DORK OF A SHOWROOM ANNOUNCER THAT MY NAME IS PRONOUNCED ZAT-ANNA, NOT ZAN-TANNA?

ZATANNA

FOR THE NINE-MILLIONTH TIME, NO "N" IN THE FIRST SYLLABLE!

DONE.

I *MEAN* IT, ARNIE. IT'S BAD ENOUGH MY FANS ARE CONSTANTLY SCREWING IT UP.

I DON'T NEED THE SO-CALLED PRO INTRODUCING ME TO GET IT WRONG.

I TOLD HIM IF HE SCREWED IT UP AGAIN, YOU'D TURN HIM INTO AN ARMADILLO.

I'LL DO IT, TOO!

I KNOW YOU WILL, O WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST.

NOW GO *WOW* THEM!

OKAY, BIG ENTRANCE, BIG ENTRANCE...

KNOCK 'EM DEAD, ZEE.

I'LL TRY, JOEY.

GIB ECNARTNE!★

★BIG ENTRANCE!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE GIVE A WARM WELCOME TO THE AMAZING ZATANNA!

HAVE TO ADMIT, I NEVER GET TIRED OF THIS!

AND CHUCKLEHEAD GOT MY NAME RIGHT, TOO. WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?

THANK YOU! IT'S *WONDERFUL* TO BE HERE WITH YOU TONIGHT.

YES! MORE! BRAVO!

BUT I'M LONESOME UP HERE ALL BY MYSELF.

SYOB?

FINALLY, A MAGIC ACT WITH *GIRL* APPEAL!

AND SPEAKING OF MAGIC...

...LET'S DO IT!

I THINK WE'VE GOT TIME FOR JUST ONE MORE. WHO WANTS TO BE MY HELPER?

HOW ABOUT YOU, BIG GUY?
YES, MA'AM.
LOUIS! SIT DOWN!
DON'T WORRY, MA'AM. I'LL RETURN HIM IN ONE PIECE.
NOW, LOUIS, YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC, DON'T YOU?
YES I *DO!* I SAW A MAN TURN INTO A *CROW* ONCE.
SWEAR TO *GOD.*
CORA AND ME WERE DOWN IN GUATEMALA AND SAW THIS CRAZY SUMBITCH FREAKED OUT ON MUSHROOMS DANCING NAKED ON TOP OF A WATERFALL.
OH, GREAT. I GOT A TALKER!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!
DUDE JUMPS OFF THE CLIFF AND I SWEAR I SEEN BLACK FEATHERS SHOOT OUT OF HIS ARMS AND LEGS.
REAL FEATHERS! NAKED SCREAMIN' BIRD-MAN GLIDING OVER THE WATER...
TAKE CONTROL FAST, Z'ANNA!
WELL! I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN TOP *THAT,* BUT WE CAN CERTAINLY TRY.
HOW YOU DOING IN THERE, LOU?
CAN YOU MOVE?
SLAM
NOT AN INCH.
THAT'S *GOOD.* 'CAUSE I WOULD *HATE* TO HAVE YOU RUN OFF BEFORE OUR BIG FINALE!
HEY!
CLICK
A HAPPY LITTLE NUMBER I LIKE TO CALL "DEATH BY COMET." "THROUGH THE ANCIENT MISTS OF TIME, FROM ETERNAL NIGHT'S COLD EMBRACE..."
I HAVE TO WRITE SOME NEW PATTER FOR THIS BIT.
DEATH?

"I SUMMON THE MIGHTY COMET..."

IT WAS HOKEY BACK WHEN DAD USED IT.

"TO SMITE YE FROM THIS PLACE!"

NICE EFFECT THOUGH.

AAAAHH!

PAZ MIH KCAB OT SIH TAES.

LOUIS!

GODDAM!

TOP THAT, TONY BENNETT!

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOU HAVE SEEN THE IMPOSSIBLE MADE REAL!

GIVE IT UP FOR THE AMAZING ZAN...

ZATANNA!

VERY GOOD. YOU MAY LIVE.

IT FELT GREAT! LIKE BEING ALL COOL AND SPARKLY AND LOOKING DOWN ON EVERYTHING FROM MILES AWAY!

HERE YOU GO...

SHE REALLY SIGNED IT!

YOU'RE DRUNK.

AND IF YOU TRY TO SELL IT ON E-BAY, IT WILL TURN INTO A PUMPKIN.

WE WON'T!

GOT TIME FOR ONE MORE FAN?

I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE ABOUT THE NAME MIXUP.

WE HAD SANTANA HERE A WHILE BACK AND THEY DO THAT *"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN"* SONG...

...AND *UM*, THIS APOLOGY WAS SUPPOSED TO SOUND BETTER THAN *IT* DOES...

THAT'S OKAY. I ONLY HAVE THE WORLD'S MOST CONFUSING NAME. *ZATANNA ZATARA* SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOU'D SEND BACK AT AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT.

PEOPLE SCREW IT UP ALL THE TIME. I APPRECIATE THE GESTURE ANYWAY...

UH...OH, GOD...!

HAL.

HAL. SHOOT ME PLEASE!

NEVER. HOW ABOUT A DRINK INSTEAD?

LOVE TO, BUT I CAN'T.

I'M TAKING THE LATE FLIGHT OUT OF RENO.

I'VE GOT THREE MORE CITIES BEFORE I HEAD HOME.

CAN'T YOU JUST "MAGIC" YOURSELF TO WHEREVER YOU HAVE TO BE?

WHY, HAL!

YOU DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SAW THESE LAST FEW NIGHTS--

--WAS REAL?

I'VE SEEN JUST ABOUT EVERY MAGIC ACT THERE *IS*.

I'VE EVEN PICKED *UP* A FEW TRICKS MYSELF.

I'LL *BET* YOU HAVE.

STILL, I HAD *NO IDEA* HOW YOU WERE DOING THOSE ILLUSIONS.

SORRY, HAL, NEED-TO-KNOW ONLY.

I KNOW HOW *PROTECTIVE* YOU MAGICIANS ARE. I'D *NEVER* PUMP YOU FOR YOUR SECRETS.

YOUR PHONE NUMBER MAYBE, BUT NEVER YOUR SECRETS.

CORNY, BUT CUTE.

YOU MENTIONED A DRINK?

WELL, SO MUCH FOR RENO.

BREET

WHAT, ARNIE?

ANDRÉ TOLD ME YOU MISSED YOUR FLIGHT.

ANDRÉ HAS A BIG MOUTH.

LUCKY ME. NOW SHALL I CALL THE THEATER HERE IN DENVER AND SAY YOU CAN'T MAKE IT TONIGHT?

WHY? IT'S ONLY ONE-THIRTY...

...IN THE *AFTERNOON!* OH, DAMMIT!

ON MY WAY!

GOOD GIRL.

MORNING...

HEY. IT'S REALLY NOT LIKE ME TO PULL THIS TYPE OF VANISHING ACT, BUT I GOTTA GO.

NO TIME FOR BREAKFAST?

KCAP PU.

NONE. YOU GO AHEAD, THOUGH.

WHOA.

YOU'LL FIND MY NUMBER IN YOUR WALLET. CALL ME NEXT TIME YOU'RE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU, I PROMISE.

BYE.

REVNED.

WHAT A GAL.

UH, SOMEBODY ORDERED ROOM SERVICE?

THANKS. JUST LEAVE IT ON THE TABLE.

Aaand now, Ladees and Gents, presented for your diversion (and a couple a' cheap laughs) a wild 'n' wacky tour thru a funtastic fantasy-land! A little excursion I like to call...

ALL ABOUT ZATANNA

She trounced 'em in Tahoe, destroyed 'em in Denver, and hammered 'em in Houston, to boot! Another triumphant tour by the the marvelous maid of magic!

But away from the footlights and fishnets, who is this Zatanna chick, really?

NO ONE SPECIAL. JUST THE WORKIN'EST GIRL IN THE MAGIC BIZ.

phooey! There's more to you than *that*, kid!

HEY!

Speaking of kids, it wasn't that long ago that you were learning the craft at your daddy's *knee.*

Of course, having a sorceress for a mother and the world's greatest magician for a father *did* give you a leg up in the business.

"Yet even with all that power at your command, it wasn't enough to save Zatara when he gave himself up for you."

But life, and the show, must go on. In time you returned to the stage, eventually surpassing Blackstone, Houdini and even your *father* as the greatest magician of all time.

SOLD

THAT'S A BIT OF AN *OVERSTATEMENT*, DON'T YOU THINK?

Quiet! I'm on a roll!

You even found some time for a personal life, too. Though truth to tell, making tigers appear from thin air is a lot easier than trying to create a meaningful relationship.

DINNER WAS WONDERFUL, SCOTT, BUT YOU REALLY DIDN'T HAVE TO. THIS PLACE IS *EXPENSIVE.*

NOT A PROBLEM.

UH, *YOU* WANT TO TAKE CARE OF THAT?

CHECK

OH. WELL, I THOUGHT AS *YOU* ASKED *ME* OUT, I JUST *ASSUMED...*

NO, NO!

THEN WHAT...?

JUST WHIP US *UP* SOME MONEY. OR MAKE THE BILL *DISAPPEAR.*

I CAN'T *DO* THAT!

SURE YOU CAN! I'VE SEEN YOUR ACT. ABRACADABRA! POOF! BE GONE!

OH AND WHILE YOU'RE *AT* IT, I NEED A COUPLE BUCKS FOR THE PARKING GUY.

FOOP! EB ENOG!

WHAT'D I SAY?!

And let's not forget *this* ambitious young fellow...

LOOK, I *KNOW* ABOUT THE MAGIC STUFF AND IT'S *NO PROBLEM.*

AS FAR AS *I'M* CONCERNED, YOU CAN *MAKE* WITH THE HOCUS-POCUS WHENEVER YOU WANT.

THAT'S VERY GENEROUS OF YOU, DON.

HEY, I GREW *UP* ON TV SHOWS LIKE *"BEWITCHED"* AND *"JEANNIE"* AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT DARRIN AND TONY WERE COMPLETE LOSERS.

I MEAN, IF I HAD A *BABE* WHO COULD ZAP UP MAD SHIT FOR ME, WHY THE HELL *NOT?*

A CAR, A BOAT, HOUSE, ANYTHING YOU WANT TO LAY ON ME, IT'S *MORE* THAN COOL WITH THE DONSTER.

YOU KNOW, *"DONSTER,"* I USED TO WATCH THOSE SHOWS, TOO. HERE'S A LITTLE SOMETHING I PICKED UP...

A'AAAHH!

YOU PISSED HER OFF TOO, *HUH?*

THAT WAS A *JOKE!* BESIDES, HE *DID* HAVE IT COMING!

No argument here. I just thought I'd illustrate that even someone with near-limitless magic power can suffer life's tragedies and disappointments.

NOW THERE'S A BRILLIANT INSIGHT.

I know. ***Painfully*** basic. I'm only an imaginary rabbit, after all.

I'm not the one who can work miracles. I'm not the one filling my life with a crushing performance schedule. I'm not the one running ragged to keep my agent happy and my fans enthralled.

I'm not the one who has family and friends vanishing from my life like trained doves...

RIP

OR AM I THE ONE WHO VANISHES FROM *THEIRS?*

STAY IN YOUR *OWN* DREAMS, WILL YOU?

SGAB WOLLOF.

AM I GLAD TO BE HOME. I FEEL LIKE...

?

HUH. NOTHING.

I'M *MORE* STRESSED THAN I THOUGHT.

NOITCETORP LLEPS TFIL. ESUOH NEPO.

I'LL UNPACK LATER. RIGHT NOW ALL I WANT IS A HOT *BATH*...

...AND A WEEK'S SLEEP IN MY OWN...

AAAHHH!

OH. MORNING, LUV. FIX US SOME BREAKY THEN, THERE'S A GOOD GIRL.

SHIT, CONSTANTINE! GET OUT OF MY BED!

NEVER GET TIRED OF SAYING THAT, DO YOU?

NAELC PU!

YOU HAVE *FIVE SECONDS* TO EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE BEFORE I BLAST YOUR NAKED, PASTY *ASS* TO VENEZUELA!

MAKE IT TEN, LUV.

HAVEN'T BEEN FEELING MY BEST IN THE A.M....

!

RROLLPHH!

SORRY ABOUT THE BED.

DON'T KNOW *HOW* YOU GOT PAST THE PROTECTION SPELL AND DON'T *CARE!* JUST *GO!*

IF YOU RECALL, I WAS THE ONE WHO *TAUGHT* YOU THE HOUSE LOCK, SO IT WAS NO TROUBLE FOR ME TO SLIP IN.

THAT'S RIGHT, JOHN. HOW *SILLY* OF ME TO HAVE FORGOTTEN. *LEAVE!*

DON'T MAKE ME SAY IT *BACKWARDS!*

RIGHT AFTER BREAKFAST, LUV.

STILL GOING THE *VEGGIE* ROUTE I SEE. THOUGH NOT SO FAR GONE THAT YOU'VE GIVEN IN TO *SOY* MILK.

HELP YOURSELF, JOHN. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME. WANT ME TO SQUEEZE YOU FRESH ORANGE JUICE TO GO WITH THAT?

WOULD YOU?

NO!

LISTEN, JOHN. IT'S NOT THAT IT ISN'T A PIP TO SEE YOU AGAIN...

...BUT YOU CAN'T USE MY PLACE AS YOUR POST-BINGE FLOPHOUSE!

I WOULDN'T HAVE IF IT WEREN'T AN *EMERGENCY*, LUV.

OLD JOHNNY'S GOT HIMSELF IN TROUBLE AGAIN AND RIGHTLY DESERVED I DARE SAY.

YOU'D BETTER HAVE A SEAT.

I AM SIT...

OH, JEEZUS!

AAAA...

AAAA...

YEAH, THAT WAS MORE OR LESS THE SAME REACTION I HAD, TOO.

HOW...?

AAAAAAAA...

A GIFT FROM A *FRIEND* OF YOURS NAMED NIMUE.

NIMUE RAVENSONG?! JOHN, THAT POSER'S NO FRIEND OF *MINE!*

SHE'S A USER AND A PARASITE WHO PERVERTS THE VERY *NATURE* OF MAGIC!

WAIT!

LAEH DNA EB DESNAELC.

AAAAAA!

UNNGH!

OH!

I'M SO SORRY!

TRIED THAT ALREADY, LUV. SEEMS SHE'S STILL GOT THE DIBS ON ME.

"OUR EVENING TOGETHER BROUGHT A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE WORDS 'UNSAFE SEX'.

"FROM THE LOOK OF HER, I FIGURED YOUR FRIEND WOULD BE INTO THE ROUGH STUFF. I HAD NO IDEA *HOW* ROUGH.

γωθκ ιμωλαζ βφτμγ!

AAAAAAA...

"ONE WICKED LOVE-BITE AND A WHISPER OF SUMERIAN LATER, I HAD A NEW MOUTH TO FEED.

"IT WAS ABOUT THAT TIME THE JEALOUS *BOYFRIEND* APPEARED."

"CONSIDERING MY OPTIONS, I THOUGHT IT BEST TO MAKE A DIGNIFIED EXIT."

I MADE IT HERE, UNLOCKED THE HOUSE, AND SEALED MYSELF IN BEFORE THAT THING COULD OVERCOME THE BARRIER.

THAT EXPLAINS THE SHUDDER I GOT OUTSIDE. NIMUE'S PLAYMATE MUST STILL BE LURKING AROUND.

YOU'RE GETTING *SLOPPY*, JOHN. TIME WAS YOU'D SEE SUCH AN OBVIOUS SETUP COMING WITH YOUR EYES *CLOSED*. THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR LETTING *"LITTLE JOHNNY"* DO YOUR THINKING.

IF IT'S ANY *CONSOLATION*, *"LITTLE JOHNNY"* HAD HELP. NIMUE'S NOT THE MOST POWERFUL MAGIC USER, BUT SHE'S GREAT WITH CHARM AND ALLURE SPELLS.

SHE ZIPPED RIGHT UNDER YOUR RADAR AND WENT FOR YOUR HEART. *UH*, AND ALL POINTS *SOUTH*. DON'T FEEL BAD, I KNOW SHE'S DONE IT TO *HUNDREDS* OF MEN.

SO ANY THEORIES ON WHAT I SHOULD *DO* ABOUT IT? I'M GETTING DAMNED TIRED OF SQUEAKY HERE CALLING TO HIS MATE IN THE ALLEY.

AAAAA

I'D HAVE CUT OFF MY HAND BY NOW BUT I WASN'T SURE WHERE YOU KEPT THE KNIVES AND DIDN'T WANT TO RUMMAGE THROUGH YOUR THINGS.

IT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE GROWN BACK ANYWAY. FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, NIMUE'S OFFERING YOU UP TO ONE OF SEVERAL MINOR DEMONS KNOWN COLLOQUIALLY IN HELL AS *TRADERS*.

FIGURED AS MUCH. MY LIFE AS BARTER FOR SOME ENCHANTED TRINKET OR OBJECT OF POWER.

THE TRADER USUALLY TRIES TO TRICK AND KILL WHOEVER SUMMONS IT, UNLESS THE MAGICIAN CAN OFFER AN INNOCENT LIFE IN RETURN. THAT THING ON YOUR HAND WILL CALL TO THE TRADER AS LONG AS THE DEBT GOES UNPAID, OR UNTIL THE ITEM IS WILLINGLY RETURNED TO THE DEMON.

SSERD ROF ELTTAB!

YOU STAY PUT. I'LL SETTLE WITH NIMUE.

AND KEEP AWAY FROM THE KNIVES, OKAY?

S'EUMIN ESUOH.

STILL BLOODY WONDERFUL.

YEAH, RIGHT.

MERRY MEET *THIS*, BITCH.

Merry Meet. Enter and Welcome.

SHOW YOURSELF, NIMUE.

HELP... HELP...

HELP... HELP...

HELP... HELP...

GUUHH... HELP...

PLEASE...

...HELP ME...

...GET AWAY... FROM HER...

GOD!

GARY?

WHERE DID YOU RUN OFF TO, YOU *NAUGHTY* CREATURE?

LEAVING WITHOUT SOME *CUDDLE-TIME*, GARY?

I DON'T *LIKE* THAT.

I'M...MY NAME IS... GREG.

MMM. THE POINT IS *MOOT* NOW, ISN'T IT?

UHHH... HURR...

BEST WAY TO GET RID OF A ONE-NIGHT STAND, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, Z'ANNA?

YOU'RE *DISGUSTING.*

RUUK... RRUUK...

DON'T GET SO HIGH AND MIGHTY. I BET YOU'VE FILLED A *DOZEN* PONDS WITH YOUR EX-BOYFRIENDS.

GODDESS *KNOWS* YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH.

I'M MAKING CAPPUCCINO. WANT SOME?

RIAHC, EREH!

I WANT A *RELEASE* FOR JOHN CONSTANTINE AND I WANT IT *NOW!*

WELL, IF YOU'RE GONNA GET *PISSY* ABOUT IT...

HERE. IT'S JUST A BASIC WISHING CHARM.

NOTHING I COULDN'T ACCOMPLISH MYSELF WITH A FULL MOON AND A VIAL OF VIRGIN'S BLOOD, TAKE IT AND GO.

THAT'S IT?

HARDLY SEEMS WORTH THE AGONY OF SUMMONING A..

!

AAAGHH!

MOTHER HECATE'S HATE, THAT WAS EASY!

YOU FELL FOR THE SAME MISDIRECTION YOU USE IN YOUR MAGIC SHOW.

PLOP

WE COULD WORK UP A SISTER ACT IF YOU WEREN'T GOING TO BE *DEAD* IN THIRTY SECONDS.

UHHH...!

JUST SO YOU KNOW, THIS WAS WHAT I *REALLY* GOT FROM THE TRADER...

...A NEEDLE CARVED FROM ONE OF THE DEMON'S BONES.

A SIPHON OF SORTS, THAT DRAINS THE LIFE FORCE OF WHOMEVER IT STABS...

...AND TRANSMITS IT TO THE NEEDLE'S... *AAHHH!*

GOD *FUCKING* DAMN! WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF?!

IT'S LIKE ORAL SEX WITH A LIGHT SOCKET!

SUCK ON THIS! *HSAMS!*

SMASH

UNNGH!

INTERLUDE.

ZAP!

HULLO?

AAHHMMM...

MAY I HELP YOU, MATE?

UH, HI. I'M LOOKING FOR ZATANNA.

WE MET IN TAHOE LAST WEEK.

OH. LET'S GET YOUR ARSE IN THEN. COME ON, BEFORE SOMETHING *NASTIER* SNEAKS IN WITH YOU.

YOU MUST BE THE NEW CONQUEST.

WELL, WE'RE FRIENDS AND SHE...IS SHE *HERE?*

GONE TO RUN AN ERRAND. SHOULD BE BACK ANY SECOND, IF SHE *SURVIVES.*

I'M JOHN, AN OLD FAMILY FRIEND.

HI. HAL COOK.

AAAAH...

DON'T MIND THE PAW, I'M UNDER A CURSE.

A CURSE?

OH, NOT TO TURN YOU *OFF* TO OUR GIRL, BUT YOU *MUST* HAVE SEEN SHE'S NOT ALL CARD TRICKS AND SLEIGHT OF HAND.

WELL, I *DID* SEE A FEW... DID SHE DO THAT?

OH NO. THIS IS ME OWN FUCK UP. NO, ZEE'S NOT THE VENGEFUL TYPE, USUALLY.

THOSE WHO *LIVED*, THAT IS, CHIN-CHIN.

CLINK

STILL, SHE DOES DANCE AT THE EDGE OF A DARK WORLD. NO SOUR GRAPES, HAROLD, BUT SOME OF THE BLOKES WHO HAVE TAKEN THAT WALTZ WITH HER HAVE LIVED TO *REGRET* IT.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE WITCH'S CONDO...

YOU'RE PURE MAGIC. THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?

THERE'S NO LIEN ON YOUR SOUL, NO PRICE TO PAY FOR YOUR SKILLS. IT'S AS NATURAL TO YOU AS BREATHING.

JUST MUTTER SOME BACKWARDS BULLSHIT AND THY WILL BE DONE.

UHH!
THAT'S NOT *FAIR!*
...OR THE *YEARS* I'VE TRADED OFF MY LIFE FOR THE SMALLEST *FRACTION* OF YOUR POWER?
SURE. I'VE GOT NO PLACE TO BE ANYTIME SOON.
WHAK
SHALL I TELL YOU OF THE *INNOCENTS* I'VE SACRIFICED...
AHH...
HELP...
OH, THAT'S GOOD. NOTHING LIKE A SOUL IN AGONY TO GET THE *BLOOD* PUMPING AGAIN.
HONEST TO GOD, NIM. I LOOK AT YOU AND WONDER, "*WHY IS THIS GIRL STILL SINGLE?*"
THOK
YAHHH!
JUST BUILDING UP MY STRENGTH, DEAR. I HAVE TO BE AT MY PEAK WHEN I ABSORB YOUR LIFE FORCE.
DO TELL.
THERE'S REALLY NOTHING TO *SAY,* ZEE. I'M GOING TO STAB YOU THROUGH THE HEART, DRAIN OFF EVERY BIT OF YOUR ESSENCE AND TAKE YOUR POWER FOR MY OWN.
WHAT?
THAT'S PRETTY AMBITIOUS FOR A *SLOTH.*

YOU HEARD ME.

AUUUGHH! YOU BITCH! YOU BITCH!

A BETTER USE OF MISDIRECTION, "DEAR." ONCE YOU'VE GOT THE EVIL WITCH TALKING ABOUT HER BIG BAD PLAN, WHISPER A LITTLE SPELL AND POOF!

I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS! I SWEAR!

NOW IT'S MY TURN TO DICTATE POLICY.

SNIFF!

YOU ARE GOING TO GIVE ME THAT NEEDLE AND RELEASE CONSTANTINE FREE AND CLEAR FROM YOUR CURSE, OR I'LL CAST ANOTHER SPELL AND RENDER YOU FOREVER MUTE.

THEN I'LL DROP YOU BY THE SAN FRANCISCO ZOO. WHERE YOU'LL SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE--

--PISSING YOURSELF UPSIDE DOWN FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF FIELD TRIP KIDS.

YOU WIN.

I, NIMUE RAVENSONG, SWEAR AWAY ANY AND ALL CLAIM TO THIS GIFT AND ITS POWER...

AND...?

GOOD GIRL.

AND RELEASE THE MAN JOHN CONSTANTINE FROM MY WILL.

BY THAT, OF COURSE, YOU MEAN YOU'VE LEARNED A *VALUABLE* LESSON AND WILL BE TREATING HUMAN LIVES MORE *RESPECTFULLY* IN THE FUTURE.

I WON'T FORGET THIS, ZATANNA.

EROTSER MEHT.

I SORT OF FIGURED.

HARDLY.

SEE YA, NIM. THANKS.

EMOH.

UH, PLEASE...?

AAAHHHH!

ON YOUR KNEES, TOADS!

...

OF COURSE, ZEE WASN'T BEING *MEAN* WHEN SHE CHANGED THE SILLY FUCK. HE *DARED* HER TO DO IT.

ONE SECOND, HE'S SIMON, A SUCCESSFUL INVESTMENT BROKER PULLING DOWN FIVE MILLION A YEAR, THE NEXT, *"SHE'S"* RAKING IN DOLLAR TIPS AS *"AMBER,"* A NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD RUNWAY DANCER AT FOXXES.

BULLSHIT.

S'TREWTH. Z'ANNA ONLY MEANT IT AS A JOKE FOR A MINUTE OR TWO, A BIT OF NAUGHTY ROLE-PLAYING AMONG LOVERS, AS IT WERE.

BUT *"AMBER"* FOUND THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE SO INCREDIBLY LIBERATING THAT SHE BEGGED ZEE TO LET HER STAY THAT WAY.

EVEN THREATENED TO KILL HERSELF IF ZATANNA EVER LIFTED THE SPELL.

IN THE END, ZEE GAVE IN. HAD A *HELL* OF A TIME EXPLAINING IT TO SIMON'S PARENTS, THOUGH.

DON'T THINK I EVER HEARD HOW THE LAWSUIT CAME OUT.

FUNNY THING IS, FOR A *WHILE* THERE ZEE REALLY THOUGHT SIMON MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE ONE. AH WELL, *C'EST L'AMOUR*, EH, HAROLD?

JOHN? I'M BACK.

BUT THAT'S *NOTHING* COMPARED TO THE POOR SOD WHO THOUGHT HE'D HAVE A BROWSE THROUGH HER MAGIC BOOKS.

HE NEVER *DREAMED* THAT MERELY OPENING A CERTAIN UNMARKED VOLUME COULD CAUSE AN ANCIENT SPIRIT TO REND HIM INTO SMALL, BLOODY...

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED... *OH!* HAL.

HI.

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

I HAPPENED TO BE IN THE CITY AND THOUGHT I MIGHT SURPRISE YOU. IF THIS IS A BAD TIME...?

WELL, I WAS JUST GETTING IN FROM MY TOUR. IF I COULD GRAB A BATH AND A NAP FIRST, I COULD MEET YOU FOR LUNCH AROUND ONE...

IT'S SEVEN P.M., LUV.

SEVEN? DAMN, THAT WITCH HAD ME OUT LONGER THAN I THOUGHT.

AT LEAST I FORCED THAT TRINKET OUT OF HER.

YOU'RE BLEEDING!

JUST A FLESH WOUND, HON.

I'M SURE OUR BOY HAROLD WILL BE HAPPY TO KISS IT AND MAKE IT BETTER.

YEAH. YOU KNOW, I *REALLY* SHOULD RUN. I'M ONLY IN TOWN FOR THE DAY AND IT'S A LONG DRIVE BACK TO TAHOE.

OH. WELL, IF YOU NEED TO BE BACK THERE AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME, I COULD JUST...

NO! THAT'S OKAY. YOU'RE TIRED AND YOU'RE HURT, YOU GET SOME REST.

CALL ME NEXT TIME YOU'RE UP AT THE LAKE.

BUT I'M NOT SCHEDULED TO DO TAHOE UNTIL NEXT...

SLAM

WE'RE OUT OF BRANDY, LUV.

NOT A PROBLEM FOR *YOU* OF COURSE. TWITCH YOUR NOSE AND YOU'LL HAVE A LIQUOR STORE.

WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

ANSWER ME!

HMM. WE'RE OUT OF VODKA, TOO.

I DON'T *BELIEVE* THIS!

I'M OUT RISKING MY *NECK* FOR YOU WHILE YOU'RE SITTING HERE--

--MERRILY TRASHING ANY CHANCE I HAVE OF A PERSONAL LIFE!

OH, YOU KNOW ME. ALWAYS FULL OF FUN.

TUO!

HOW *DARE* YOU DRIVE AWAY THAT POOR, SWEET GUY?

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. HE'S A POOR, SWEET GUY.

SIMPLE BASTARD HAD *NO IDEA* WHAT HE WAS LETTING HIMSELF IN FOR, AND YOU WEREN'T GOING TO TELL HIM, WERE YOU?

HE KNEW ABOUT THE MAGIC, JOHN.

BUT NOT THE DANGER THAT COMES WITH IT.

LOOK, LUV, I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU UNHAPPY AND ALONE.

WELL, PERHAPS A SMALL, ***JEALOUS*** PART OF ME DOES...

EMOCEB A YMILS...!

BUT WHAT WE HAD IS PAST! I KNOW THAT! WE'RE BETTER APART THAN WE *EVER* WERE TOGETHER.

SO WHY DO YOU CARE WHO I'M WITH?

'COS SOMEONE SHOULD.

MORE THAN A COUPLE OF BLOKES HAVE FOLLOWED THE DAZZLING ZATANNA INTO HER WORLD AND NEVER RETURNED. 'LEAST NOT THE WAY THEY STARTED.

YOU SELF-RIGHTEOUS *ASSHOLE!* YOU THINK THAT DOESN'T TEAR ME UP?

EVERY TIME SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME HAS SUFFERED BECAUSE OF MAGIC, IT *WRECKS* ME.

BUT HEY, THAT'S THE FIRST TRICK IN THE MAGIC KIT: YOU HANG OUT WITH ZATANNA, SOONER OR LATER YOU'LL GET ZAPPED.

WHY *ELSE* WOULD I SPEND MOST OF MY LIFE ON THE ROAD?

KEEP MOVING AND THERE'S LESS OF A CHANCE I'LL HURT SOMEONE, EXCEPT MAYBE *ME.*

I'M SURE YOU'VE KNOWN THE FEELING, JOHN.

TOUCHÉ, LUV. I WAS JUST TRYING TO SPARE YOU MORE OF THE SAME.

YEAH. BY ACTING LIKE THE GODDAMN STEWED-OFF-HIS-ASS JIMINY CRICKET I DON'T NEED TO HEAR FROM RIGHT NOW.

LOOK, HERE'S YOUR CURSED DOOHICKEY. I'M PINNING IT TO YOUR COAT SO YOU CAN FIND IT LIKE A GOOD LITTLE DRUNKEN BOY.

WHEN THE BAD OLD *BOGEY* MAN COMES TO RIP YOU INTO *DOG CHOW*, HAND IT TO HIM WITH AN APPROPRIATE OATH OF FORFEIT AND HE'LL VANISH, LEAVING BEHIND NOTHING WORSE THAN THE STINK OF ROTTEN EGGS.

GOT THAT? *GOOD. WON TIH EHT DAOR!*

A MILLION THANKS, LUV.

SNAFU

I REALLY NEED THAT BATH.

THUD THUNK

"EVERYTHING HAPPENS TO ME."

I CAN RELATE TO THAT.

GOOD MUSIC, LOVELY MERLOT. ENJOY, GIRL. YOU'VE *EARNED* IT.

DAMN STRAIGHT.

WORRIES VANISHING LIKE SOAP BUBBLES.

NO MORE FIENDS FROM HELL, RATTY EX-LOVERS, OR BOTTOM-FEEDING MAGIC WANNABES LIKE NIMUE, *UGH!*

RAVENSONG. GOD, WHAT A STUPID NAME. SHE COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A MORE OBVIOUS...

OH, SHIT! SHIT!

GNIKROW SEHTOLC WON!

AT THAT MOMENT IN CHINATOWN...

FUCKING BASTARD!

LOOK, MATE, I PLAYED BY THE *RULES.*

GAVE THE PROPER SUPPLICATION AND OFFERED THE TALISMANS AS STIPULATED.

ONE OF US IS NOT FOLLOWING PROTOCOL AND I DON'T THINK IT'S *ME.*

TEL MIH OG!

BEAUTY.

S'REDART ELDEEN OT EM!

HOW'D YOU KNOW I FUCKED UP?

YOU DIDN'T, I DID. I WAS TIRED AND NIMUE WALKED ME INTO A STUPID MISTAKE.

I FORGOT ONE OF THE BASIC RULES OF SORCERY.

TRANSACTIONS LIKE THIS ALWAYS HINGE ON THE SUMMONER USING HER *REAL* NAME AS SHE INVOKES OR DISPELS A DEMON.

NO ONE ON THIS PLANE OF REALITY IS BORN WITH THE NAME NIMUE RAVENSONG. SHE USES IT BECAUSE IT SOUNDS *"GOTH."*

I'LL *SPANK* YOU LATER. JUST *KILL* THE BLOODY THING.

KCAB!

YOU CANNOT BANISH ME. ONCE SUMMONED, I WILL NOT LEAVE WITHOUT MY OFFERING PROPERLY RETURNED...

...OR A SOUL IN ITS PLACE.

FINE!

I, ZATANNA ZATARA, ACTING AT THE BEHEST OF MARY ANN HOYT, SWEAR AWAY ALL HER CLAIMS TO THIS GIFT AND ITS POWER, AND RELEASE THE MAN, JOHN CONSTANTINE, FROM HER WILL.

OR, TO PUT IT IN MY OWN WORDS...

EKAT TI DNA EB DENMAD!

AAGHH!

RESIDUAL BAD MOJO, THE BACKLASH OF A TRADE GONE SOUR.

OW. PART OF ME PITIES THE POOR, SILLY BITCH.

REALLY?

NO.

WATCH IT!

I'M WARNING YOU, I STILL HAVE THE KNIFE!

HELLO?

OH, THIS IS... JUST GREAT.

OKAY. OKAY. YOU WANT A FIGHT, WITCH?

YOU'VE GOT ONE!

YOU'RE DEAD, ZATANNA! DEAD AND DAMNED! I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH OF MY SOUL I HAVE TO SELL OR HOW MANY DEVILS I HAVE TO FUCK, BUT I WILL SEE YOU IN AGONY FOR...

AAHH!

OH, HELL...!

BLOODY GORGEOUS.

THE SCARS ARE HEALING NICELY.

WASN'T TALKING ABOUT ME HAND.

NEITHER WAS I.

SO YOU MEANT WE'RE HEALING OLD WOUNDS AND POSSIBLY GROWING CLOSER AGAIN. HAVEN'T BEEN MAKING WITH YOUR TRICKS, HAVE YOU?

NOTHING UP MY SLEEVE, PROMISE.

SURE YOU WON'T COME WITH ME?

IT'S A SECRET ENCLAVE OF THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD MYSTICS HOLED UP IN A LOST NEPALESE VALLEY.

COULD BE WORTH A LAUGH OR TWO IF I CAN *FIND* THE PLACE.

TEMPTING, BUT I'M THROUGH ADVENTURING. MAYBE *FOREVER.*

NOT YOU, LUV. YOU'RE TOO DIFFERENT FROM THE EVERYDAY WORLD TO LIVE IN IT FOR LONG.

IT'S THE *MAGIC* IN YOU. IT GETS *RESTLESS.*

WELL, IT'S STAYING PUT FOR NOW, ALONG WITH ITS MISTRESS.

BUT SAY HELLO TO MASTER VEEKRUM FOR ME. IT'S BEEN AGES.

GOOD-BYE, JOHN. BE WELL.

SAY IT BACKWARDS.

B3

THE NEXT DAY.

HERE'S TO THE EVERYDAY WORLD.

WITH THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY, OUR HEROINE IS FILLED WITH FRESH RESOLVE.

?

ALBO'S MAGIC EMPORIUM

THE GATHERING

...MET ME BACKSTAGE WHEN WE WERE BOTH DOING LENO LAST YEAR.

ANYWAY, I'VE GOT A MOVIE SHOOTING IN 'FRISCO THIS MONTH AND WAS HOPING WE COULD GET TOGETHER.

Magic Castle

Magic Castle

FEAR FAIL

Magic Zatanna

I'M STILL GOING TO KILL YOU...

DRINK YOUR TEA, MARY ANN.

Magic Castle

Magic Castle

THE EVERYDAY WORLD SUCKS.

TWO NIGHTS LATER...

ZATANNA

MISTRESS OF MAGIC

THANK YOU, LAS VEGAS!

IT'S *GREAT* TO BE BACK! GOOD NIGHT!

I RULE. IT'S TRUE. I *TOTALLY* RULE.

I'M *THRILLED* YOU'RE DOING THE GIG, ZEE. BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SIX MONTHS BEFORE YOU WANTED TO TOUR AGAIN.

WELL, IT'S LIKE A FRIEND TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY, ARNIE. IT'S JUST THE MAGIC IN ME.

BY THE WAY, THANKS FOR THE FLOWERS.

NOT ME, HON. READ.

To the new #1 star in Vegas from the new #2.

love always,
Tony

...

YES!

The End

KCIRT RO TAERT

PAUL DINI
writer

DUSTIN NGUYEN
artist & colorist

JOHN J. HILL
letterer

AS ALL OF YOU KNOW, I AM WONT TO SPREAD MAYHEM NOW AND THEN THROUGH *MY CHEMICAL CREATIONS.*

RECENTLY I HEARD A RATHER CAPTIVATING TALE OF SOME TALENTED AMATEURS WHO TRIED A SIMILAR TACK LAST HALLOWEEN.

"AH, HALLOWEEN. WITH YOUR CREPE PAPER THRILLS AND CARDBOARD TERRORS."

"IS THERE A MORE FITTING TIME FOR YOUNG SCALAWAGS TO BE PLAYING THEIR INNOCENT PRANKS?"

"AND IF SOME UNWARY BRAT SHOULD WIND UP ON THE RECEIVING END OF THE MISCHIEF..."

"... WELL, HE HAS NO ONE TO BLAME BUT HIMSELF, SAY I."

"AND SO WAS SPUN A CAUTIONARY PARABLE OF GLUTTONY'S SIN, ONE FROM WHICH EVERY INTELLIGENT CHILD CAN PROFIT."

"MY STORY WOULD END ON THAT PRUDENT NOTE IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE INTRUSION OF A CERTAIN *SORCERESS*."

ildren's HOSP
HALLOWEEN
PARTY!
specia
guest
ZATANNA

"INSTEAD OF SPENDING HER ALL HALLOWS EVE IN A SEANCE OR SAMHAIN FESTIVAL, SHE HAD OPTED TO ENTERTAIN THE AILING YOUNGSTERS OF HER CITY."

"JUVENILE NONSENSE FOR ONE WITH HER POWERS. ONE MIGHT QUESTION HER SANITY FOR CONDUCTING SUCH A DISPLAY."

"BE THAT AS IT MAY, SHE WAS PRESENT WHEN THE HALLUCINATING LITTLE SHOAT WAS WHEELED IN."

"ACCOUNTS VARY AS TO WHAT NEXT TRANSPIRED. SOME WITNESSES CLAIM THE WITCH CALMED THE LAD SIMPLY BY PLACING A HAND ON HIS FEVERISH BROW."

"OTHERS THEORIZED THAT SHE SAW WHAT THE BOY SAW--THE *HORRORS* CREATED IN HIS DRUG-RAVAGED MIND."

"ONE THING WAS CERTAIN, THE MAGE KNEW WHAT HAD BEEN DONE TO THE CHILD AND SHE *DID NOT* LIKE IT."

"THUS IT HAPPENED ONE LAST GROUP OF TRICK OR TREATERS WAS DISPATCHED INTO THAT COLD OCTOBER NIGHT..."

"...AND THE PRANKSTERS SOON FOUND THEMSELVES AMONG THE PRANKED."

"THE POLICE REPORT READ THAT A DRUG PARTY HAD TURNED VIOLENT, THE HALLUCINATING REVELERS FALLING UPON EACH OTHER IN A BLOODTHIRSTY FURY."

"OF THE *DEMONS* THEY CLAIMED ATTACKED THEM, NO TANGIBLE PROOF WAS FOUND SAVE FOR THEIR STASH OF *ILLICIT NARCOTICS.*"

"AT THE GANGS' TRIAL, THE JUDGE REMARKED IT WAS IRONICALLY JUST THAT THEY HAD FALLEN PREY TO THEIR ADDICTIONS..."

"AND SUFFERED A RIGHTEOUS TASTE OF THEIR OWN MEDICINE."

"CUTE STORY SCARECROW, BUT I DON'T BUY IT. FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, ZATANNA IS NOT *NEARLY* THAT VENGEFUL."

"TRUST ME SHE IS."

ZATANNA

PAUL DINI

STEPHANE ROUX
penciller

KARL STORY
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX
cover

CAPTURED BY MY WORST ENEMIES

CHAINED AND GAGGED, UNABLE TO FREE MYSELF OR UTTER A SPELL

ANYONE ELSE IN MY SPOT WOULD PRAY THE END CAME QUICKLY AND ACCEPT THEIR FATE

BUT I'M NOT ANYONE ELSE. I'M A *MAGICIAN*

SEPOR DNIB MEHT!

AND THE ONLY FATE I ACCEPT IS THE ONE I CONTROL

VERY NICE, GENTLEMEN. THOUGH, JON, YOU WERE LATE ON YOUR ENTRANCE.

SORRY, ZEE. IT'S THIS CAPE. HOW ARE REAL PEOPLE SUPPOSED TO WEAR THESE?

DROP IT IN WARDROBE. I'LL HAVE RUTHIE SHORTEN IT FOR THE NEXT SHOW.

AND AS TO HOW TO WEAR IT, PRACTICE.

MIKEY, THE HINGES ON THE TRAP DOOR NEED TO BE REPLACED.

ON IT, BOSS.

HMM

ANY MORE DISASTERS BEFORE I COLLAPSE INTO A BUBBLE BATH AND A GLASS OF MERLOT? NO? FANTASTIC.

MS. ZATARA?

I'M SORRY. WE'RE NOT DOING A MEET AND GREET TONIGHT.

I'M NOT A FAN.

REALLY. WELL, TALK TO THE BOX OFFICE ABOUT A REFUND.

SORRY. MAYBE MY I.D. CAN EXPLAIN IT MORE ELOQUENTLY.

DETECTIVE DALE COLTON.

POLICE

I HATE COMING BETWEEN YOU AND A TUB OF WARM BUBBLES, BUT I'D APPRECIATE AN HOUR OF YOUR TIME.

FOR THE POLICE? ALWAYS.

THOUGH I DON'T ALLOW SMOKING BACKSTAGE.

IF YOU NEED TO CHANGE, I CAN WAIT A FEW MINUTES.

NO NEED.

HUH. I HEARD YOU WEREN'T ALL TRICKS AND ILLUSIONS.

DOES THAT UNNERVE YOU, DETECTIVE? IT DOES SOME PEOPLE.

I READ UP ON YOUR OFF-STAGE HISTORY.

AS A MAGICIAN ON CALL WITH THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, YOU'VE PLAYED KEY ROLES IN NUMEROUS METAHUMAN AND PARANORMAL INCIDENTS, ALL FOR THE ULTIMATE GOOD OF HUMANITY, AT LEAST AS FAR AS I COULD ASCERTAIN.

VERY THOROUGH, BUT YOU DIDN'T ANSWER MY QUESTION.

I OPERATE IN THE HERE AND NOW, MS. ZATARA.

WHAT GOES ON AT THE CAPES AND TIGHTS LEVEL DOESN'T REGISTER MUCH IN A POLICE DETECTIVE'S WORLD. AT LEAST, UNTIL TONIGHT.

WHY TONIGHT?

DO YOU LIKE STEAK?

I'M A VEGETARIAN. AND...ARE YOU ASKING ME ON A DATE?

NO, BUT I THOUGHT I'D WARN YOU THAT AFTER STEPPING INSIDE THE NOB HILL CHOP HOUSE, YOU'D NEVER WANT TO LOOK AT RED MEAT AGAIN.

THAT SOUNDS OMINOUS.

BRACE YOURSELF.

WELL, DETECTIVE, YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A FLAIR FOR UNDERSTATEMENT.

RECOGNIZE THIS ONE?

HIS PICTURE WAS IN THE *CHRONICLE* OFTEN ENOUGH. ALBERT DE CECCO, LOCAL DRUG KINGPIN.

HE ONCE OFFERED ME TWO MILLION TO PLAY A PRIVATE PARTY ABOARD HIS YACHT. I TOLD HIM I WAS PRONE TO SEASICKNESS AND SAID NO.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THEM?

HARD TO SAY. MOST OF THEM WERE MYSTICALLY DISPATCHED, AND PRETTY VICIOUSLY.

TRANSFORMED, COMBUSTED, INFESTED...IT'S LIKE THE SPECTRE WENT ON A BENDER.

THE SPECTRE?

BETTER YOU DON'T KNOW.

¡NO! ¡POR FAVOR! ¡NO ME MATES!*

*NO! PLEASE! DON'T KILL ME!

FÁCIL, MIJO. NADIE HARÁ DAÑO A USTED.

¿QUÉ PASÓ?

¡HORRORES! ¡VI HORRORES! ¡ME ESCONDÍ DEBAJO DE LA MESA Y ORÉ A TODOS LOS SANTOS!

HE SAYS ONCE THE KILLING STARTED, HE HID AND PRAYED TO THE SAINTS FOR PROTECTION.

DOES THAT WORK?

AT TIMES LIKE THIS, IT CAN'T HURT.

WILL YOU LET ME SEE WHAT YOU SAW?

¿ES USTED BRUJA?

YOU'LL BE SAFE, I PROMISE. CALM. AT PEACE.

WOHS EM SIH YROMEM FO EHT SREDRUM.

I SEE THE ROOM AS IT WAS AN HOUR BEFORE. I DON'T RECOGNIZE ALL THE PLAYERS, BUT I'M SURE MOST OF THEM, LIKE DE CECCO, WERE BIG IN THE SAN FRANCISCO UNDERWORLD

THEIR MUTUAL SUSPICION TELLS ME THIS WAS NOT A SOCIAL EVENT. ANOTHER PARTY HAD SUMMONED THESE GANGSTERS TO THIS MEETING.

JUST THEN THEIR HOST ENTERED, AND HE DIDN'T COME THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

WHAT?

I JUST GOT A FIX ON THE BIG MAN. YOU WON'T FIND HIS MUG SHOT IN ANY POLICE BOOK, AND THE F.B.I. HAS NO FILE ON HIM. YET HE'S BEEN A KEY PLAYER FOR DECADES IN LOCAL CRIME.

IN THE LATE '60s, HE WAS KNOWN AS ***ELDON PECK***, A FAKE HIPPIE MYSTIC WHO DISCOVERED A DARKER WAY TO POWER BY TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN SOULS

OH. THIS IS BAD

IN RETURN, HE GOT EXTENDED LIFE AND COMMAND OF SOME SERIOUSLY NASTY MOJO. THESE DAYS HE CALLS HIMSELF ***BROTHER NIGHT***.

LOOKS LIKE HE BROUGHT A VERITABLE ROGUES' GALLERY OF THE MYSTIC UNDERWORLD WITH HIM.

ROMALTHI THE SHAPER. ONE TOUCH TRANSFORMS ITS VICTIM INTO WHATEVER ROMALTHI'S MASK DEPICTS.

EMBER, AN UNBORN DRAGON GESTATING IN THE FORM OF A HUMAN GIRL.

AND TEDDY. DON'T GET ME STARTED ON TEDDY.

BROTHER NIGHT AND HIS GOONS STARTED SMALL. I'M SURE YOU'D AGREE THAT IT'S GANGSTER 101, DETECTIVE BOLTON.

VICTIMIZE AN INNOCENT AND ALL THE BAD GUYS PAY ATTENTION. THAT ALONE SHOULD HAVE INSTILLED THE PROPER NOTE OF TERROR, FOLLOWED BY UNWAVERING OBEDIENCE.

BUT I SEE NOW THEY WEREN'T HERE TO RECRUIT ALLIES.

THIS WAS MASS MURDER, PLAIN AND SIMPLE.

YOU WANNA SEE A BUG?

JESUS, TEDDY...

UGH...!

IF I HAD TO GUESS, I'D SAY BROTHER NIGHT IS ACTIVELY EXPANDING HIS CRIME EMPIRE TO INCLUDE THE HUMAN WORLD

THERE WAS NO BETTER WAY TO ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION THAN BY TAKING OUT THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE SAN FRANCISCO UNDERWORLD

AND DOING IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION ABOUT WHO RAN THE GAME

I CAN'T SAY HOW WELL THE BUSBOY'S PRAYERS AND ROSARY PROTECTED HIM...

...THOUGH IT'S EVEN MONEY BROTHER NIGHT WOULD HAVE HAPPILY ALLOWED AN IMPARTIAL SURVIVOR TO SPREAD THE STORY

PEELS TUOHTIW SERAMTHGIN.

AND I THOUGHT ONLY HUMAN GANGSTERS FOUGHT TURF BATTLES.

BOTH MYSTIC AND MUNDANE WORLDS SHARE THE SAME PLANET, DALE. EACH HAS ITS HEROES AND VILLAINS. ONLY THEIR METHODS DIFFER.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT MAGIC IS, I CAN BARELY PROCESS THAT IT EXISTS. BUT IS THERE SOME WAY YOU CAN...I DON'T KNOW, HIT THE UNDO BUTTON?

I CAN'T BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE, BUT I CAN ADD A BITTER TASTE TO NIGHT'S VICTORY. THESE PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN CRIMINALS, BUT THEY WERE BORN HUMAN.

EROTSER RIEHT NAMUH SMROF.

AND THE WORLD NEEDS TO SEE THAT HUMANS, NOT MONSTERS, WERE KILLED TONIGHT.

HUH. WONDERED WHEN JOHNNY'S KID WOULD SHOW HER HAND.

EVERYTHING OKAY?

IT'S NOTHING, BABY. A RABBIT RAN OVER MY GRAVE.

A LITTLE WHITE RABBIT.

SO HOW DO WE BRING IN THIS BROTHER NIGHT?

"WE" DON'T. THERE'S NO POLICE THESE CREATURES FEAR, NO LAW THEY OBEY, AND NO JAIL THAT HOLDS THEM.

GNIKROW SEHTOLC.

BUT THERE'S ME.

OT REHTORB S'THGIN NED.

I'M GOING TO HATE WRITING THE PAPERWORK ON THIS ONE.

7

WATCH IT, BOYS. THE SHERIFF'S IN TOWN.

YOU AIN'T WELCOME HERE, WITCH!

ECI BMOT!

GREETINGS, BROTHER NIGHT. I FIGURED YOU'D BE CELEBRATING.

LOOKS LIKE ANYTHING WHO'S ANYONE IS HERE.

THERE'S MY OLD GAL-PAL, NIMUE RAVENSONG. YOUR MOMMY SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU, NIM, IT'S DANGEROUS TO PLAY WITH KNIVES.

LET'S HEAR YOU MUMBLE YOUR SPELLS WITH A SPLIT TONGUE!

DON'T NEED A SPELL FOR YOU, HON.

AAAGH!

MISS ZATANNA... WANNA SEE A BUG?

NRUT YDDET!

OOPS...

SORRY.

WHATEVER YOU'RE PAYING THOSE LOSERS IS WAY TOO MUCH.

PREDICTABLE. I EXPECTED BETTER FROM YOU.

I SAVE MY "A" TRICKS FOR THE PAYING AUDIENCE.

PEERC NRUT OTNI A TIBBAR.

SO LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR SURPRISE PARTY AT THE RESTAURANT.

I'VE RUN THE MYSTIC UNDERWORLD IN SAN FRANCISCO FOR THE LAST FORTY YEARS.

NOW I'M TAKING THE MORTAL HALF.

BECAUSE YOU THINK YOU CAN?

BECAUSE I *KNOW* I CAN.

THE HIT WAS MY WAY OF SAYING I *OWN* SAN FRANCISCO.

THOUGH I'M DISAPPOINTED THE DAUGHTER OF MY OLD FRIEND JOHN ZATARA REWROTE MY MESSAGE.

MY FATHER CALLED YOU MANY THINGS, BROTHER NIGHT, BUT "FRIEND" WAS NOT ONE OF THEM.

HIS LOSS. YOURS, TOO, IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER YOU'RE ONLY ALLOWED HERE AS MY GUEST.

YOU INTRIGUE ME, ZATANNA.

YOU WALK AMONG ORDINARY PEOPLE AS IF YOU WERE ONE OF THEM. THEY MARVEL AT YOUR FAKERY WITH NO IDEA OF THE TRUE MIRACLES YOU PERFORM.

HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT; EVERY GOOD MAGICIAN DOES THAT TRICK.

YOU DON'T ALWAYS HIDE. MANY TIMES YOU'VE JOINED WITH HEROES AND GODS TO UPHOLD THE SO-CALLED "GOOD."

NOW, IT'S MY TURN TO ASK, "WHY?" WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

THE WORLD'S A SCARY PLACE. IF I CAN SHOW PEOPLE A FRIENDLIER ASPECT OF MAGIC, IT BENEFITS EVERYONE, MYSTIC OR MORTAL.

YOUR IDEALISM IS SO SWEET IT'S CLOYING. I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT SOURS.

I SEE DARKNESS WAITING FOR YOU. AND DISILLUSION WITH BOTH THE HUMANS AND MYSTICS YOU'VE TRIED TO PROTECT.

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE TERRIBLE REVENGE YOU'LL EXACT ON HUMANKIND ONE DAY, WITHOUT CONSCIENCE OR RESTRAINT.

I'VE OFTEN SAID DESTINY'S OVERRATED. I'D RATHER CREATE MY FUTURE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

ADMIRABLE. AND AS LONG AS WE'RE TALKING FACES...

ANNATAZ HCTIWS HTIW ELIMIN!

HUH?

AHHH!

I'LL WARN YOU ONCE--YOU WANT TO LORD YOUR POWER OVER THIS TRASH, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS. YOU SET FOOT INTO THE HUMAN WORLD AGAIN, I'LL STOP YOU IN A WAY YOU WON'T LIKE.

CHEERS.

I'D LIKE TO THINK MY TALK WITH HIM DID SOME GOOD, BUT HIS KIND DOESN'T SCARE EASILY.

"LIKE I SAID, DALE. THERE'S NO HUMAN PENALTY THAT CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR AGAINST BROTHER NIGHT."

I GUESS THE NEXT MOVE IS HIS.

YOU CAN'T LET HER GET AWAY WITH THIS.

OBVIOUSLY.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

RIGHT NOW, TAKE A NAP. BE SILENT.

I HAVE TO CALL ON AN OLD ALLY, AND HE DOESN'T TAKE KINDLY TO VISITORS.

WELL, WELL. IT'S BROTHER NIGHT, WIZARD, GURU MURDERER, FRAUD!

THE SORRIEST MISTAKE YOU COULD MAKE WAS VENTURING UNBIDDEN INTO **MY** REALM.

YOU WON'T SLEEP FOR A **THOUSAND YEARS!** I PROMISE YOU THAT!

FORGIVE ME, GREAT FUSELI. I ONLY SAW AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO STRIKE AT A COMMON ENEMY...

THERE'S NO ENEMY ON ANY PLANE OF REALITY **WORTH** ME LEAVING MY BLESSED NIGHTMARES FOR...

ZATANNA.

...I'M LISTENING.

HAHA

HAHA

THE MISTRESS OF MAGIC...

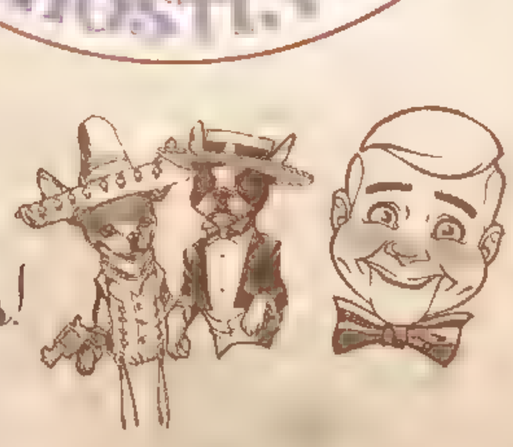
THE ARCHFOE

THE NIGHTMARE

THE GHOSTLY ALLY

THE MAGICIAN

Featuring
Peterson's Pups and Oscar Hampel's Merry-O-Nettes!



FUSELI'S NIGHTMARE

PAUL DINI
writer

STEPHANE ROUX
penciller

KARL STORY | STEPHANE ROUX
inkers

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX
cover

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, BOTH OF THE ORIGINAL VILLAINS WHO WENT BY THE NAME *HYENA* ARE LONG

OF COURSE, BEING WERE-BEASTS, IT'S NATURAL TO ASSUME THAT ANY INNOCENTS THEY MAULED ALSO BECAME HYENAS. AND WITH HYENAS BEING PACK ANIMALS, WELL I'M SURE YOU CAN SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING.

THE JLA GOT AN ALERT ABOUT THESE CREATURES MASSING IN NEW ORLEANS FOR A WIDESPREAD ATTACK ON MANKIND.

GUESS WHO GOT TAPPED TO MAKE SURE THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN?

VIXEN RETURNS SAVAGERY IN KIND, ATTACKING WITH THE POWER OF THE HYENAS' MORTAL ENEMY: THE LION

...WHILE BLACK CANARY'S SONIC CRY DOES A NUMBER ON THE BEASTS SENSITIVE EARS

EEEEEE

SANEYH EMOCEB YLTNENAMREP NAMUH!

IT WAS A NIGHTMARE!

IT'S OVER NOW.

THEN IT'S UP TO ME TO FINISH THE GAME.

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE IS SENDING LOCAL COPS TO HELP THE VICTIMS.

I'M HAPPY TO LET THEM HANDLE THE CLEANUP. YOU LADIES WANT TO GET A BEER?

ON ANY OTHER NIGHT I'D LOVE TO. BUT NOT MORE THAN TWO HOURS AGO, I PLAYED TO A PACKED HOUSE AT THE ORPHEUM, THEN TOOK ON SAN FRANCISCO'S LEADING UNDERWORLD SORCERER AND HIS GANG...

...THEN POPPED OVER HERE TO HELP YOU WITH THE MUTTS. I'M WIPED.

YOU NEED ANY HELP WITH YOUR HOMETOWN CREEPS?

I LET THEM KNOW THEY'RE IN FOR A FIGHT. FOR NOW I'LL WAIT AND SEE IF THEY TRY ANYTHING ELSE.

ANNATAZ EMOH.

MMM...

BED

BAM!

BAM!

BAM!

THAT'S IT. SOMEONE IS GOING TO DIE. SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, AND MOST LIKELY AS A SNAIL.

DAMMIT, MIKEY! I'M TRYING TO SLEEP UP HERE!

YOU NEED THE NEW CABINET FOR NEXT WEEK'S SHOW. BESIDES, I'M AN ARTIST. I WORK WHEN THE MOOD STRIKES ME.

I'LL STRIKE YOU IF YOU DON'T GET OUT OF HERE!

SORRY, BOSS. YOU KNOW THERE'S NO ZAP THAT WORKS ON ME.

OKAY, HOW ABOUT A VASE TO YOUR FOREHEAD?!

I'M GOING.

DUNNO WHY I KEEP THAT BIG GOON AROUND. YES, I DO, MIKEY'S THE BEST CARPENTER I'VE EVER HAD.

BESIDES, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT I OWE THE KID

THE WITCH IS ALONE.

ALONE, BUT NEVER UNPROTECTED.

ZATARA MANSION IS ONE OF THE MOST UNASSAILABLE SANCTUARIES IN THIS DIMENSION. MANY A STALKER AND PAPARAZZO HAVE JUMPED THE FENCE ONLY TO LAND A HUNDRED MILES AWAY.

OTHER PESTS HAVE TRIED TO GAIN ENTRY EITHER BY VIOLENCE OR MAGIC. THOSE IDIOTS CAN LATER BE FOUND WADING OUT OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY WITH THE HUMILIATING KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE SPENT THE PREVIOUS HOUR AS A MOLLUSK.

I'VE NEVER BEEN ON Z.Z.'S INVITE LIST, BUT THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM FOR THE LORD OF NIGHTMARES.

I PREFER TO TRAVEL BY LEAPING FROM DREAM TO DREAM. THE APARTMENT HOUSE NEXT DOOR IS FILLED WITH SLEEPERS.

I'LL USE THEIR DREAMS AS STEPPING STONES, MOVING EVER CLOSER TO ZATANNA UNTIL SHE SLIPS INTO MY REALM.

NO REASON I CAN'T HAVE SOME FUN UNTIL THEN. OH, THAT'S SWEET. LITTLE AMANDA FITZHUGH IS DREAMING OF HER KITTEN.

LET'S SHAKE THINGS UP A BIT. BRING IN MOM'S NEW BOYFRIEND. AMANDA FEARS GEOFFREY DOESN'T LIKE HER, SO IT'S OFF TO THE POUND WITH LITTLE SKIPPER.

LET'S CHECK OUT THE GUY UPSTAIRS. BARRY TRUSTED THE LOOKER HE'S DATING WHEN SHE TOLD HIM SHE NEEDED A NIGHT WITH THE GIRLS. WELL, SURPRISE, BUDDY...

RACHEL'S GOING FOR THE EXTRA POINT WITH TWO MEMBERS OF A COLLEGE FOOTBALL TEAM, AND ALSO, YOU'RE WATCHING, AAAND...

...YOU'RE NAKED.

MEH. KIDS' STUFF. ONWARD AND UPWARD.

21 CLUB

WHERE DO YOU COME OFF CHARGING THIS MUCH? I GOT NEEDS...

SUPPLY AND DEMAND, MY BROTHER.

HI, WILLIE. I'LL BE TAKING THAT.

AND IN RETURN YOU'LL BE GIVING ME...?

MAYBE YOUR LIFE, IF YOU BOW TO BROTHER NIGHT. HE'S THE NEW POWER IN THE CITY.

LAST THING I NEED TONIGHT, A DELUSIONAL CRACK WHORE. MOVE ALONG, SKANK.

THAT'S NOT VERY WARM, WILLIE.

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE.

TO EACH DREAM I INVADE I BRING A TOUCH OF NIGHTMARE. EVERY WINCE AND SHUDDER MAKES ME STRONGER.

I'D LOVE TO STAY AND INFLICT SOME REAL HORROR, REAPING SEIZURES AND HEART ATTACKS AMONG THE SLEEPERS.

BUT I'M ON THE JOB, AND BROTHER NIGHT WANTS THIS DONE QUICKLY.

FINALLY, THE WITCH IS ASLEEP.

DREAMING OF THE GOOD LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH DADDY. THE COLONIAL THEATRE IN BOSTON, EVERY SHOW A SELLOUT.

DADDY FORGOT HIS BOUTONNIÈRE AND YOU WENT RUNNING BACK TO GET IT.

THAT'S WHEN YOU SAW THE BAD MAN.

WHAT A LITTLE SWEETHEART. THE APPLE OF HER DADDY'S EYE.

IT'S BEEN ALMOST TWENTY YEARS, BUT YOU STILL REMEMBER THAT ONE SPECIAL NIGHT, DON'T YA, PRINCESS?

YOU COULDN'T SCREAM FOR DADDY, YOU COULDN'T UTTER A WORD TO SAVE YOURSELF.

YOU COULD ONLY WATCH IN TERROR AS THE KNIFE CAME DOWN...

NO!

FUSELI!

HIYA, DREAM GIRL. NO KISS? I'M INSULTED.

YOU GREASY LITTLE NIGHTMARE! GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

JUST HELPING YOU REVISIT A CHERISHED MEMORY.

IT NEVER HAPPENED LIKE THAT!

SO I EXAGGERATED A BIT.

WHEN I CLAW INTO A SLEEPER'S BRAIN, I REWORK MEMORIES, COMBINE THEM WITH ANXIETIES AND INSECURITIES, AND PLAY THEM BACK WHILE THE VICTIM SCREAMS.

YOU KNOW HOW I LOVE MY FUN!

AND WHILE IT'S ALWAYS A RISK TAKING ON A MYSTIC, I COULDN'T RESIST THE CHALLENGE.

I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU!

IF I CONFRONT MY NIGHTMARE, SEIZE IT BY THE NECK, I'LL WAKE UP!

AND RISK DRAGGING ME BACK INTO YOUR WORLD WITH YOU? YOU WOULDN'T DARE!

OKAY, WE'LL DO THIS MY WAY!

EVAEL YM SMAERD! EVAEL EM NI ECAEP!

NICE TRY, KIDDO.

BUT MAGIC NEVER WORKS THAT EASILY ON MY WORLD!

HERE I RIP AWAY ILLUSION FROM REALITY...

...AND FORCE YOU TO SEE YOURSELF AS YOU REALLY ARE!

STOP!

EVERYONE SEES YOU AS THIS ALL-POWERFUL MYSTIC ICON. ONLY YOU AND I KNOW THE TRUTH.

LIKE ALL HER SILLY LITTLE CARDS AND TRICKS, THE GREAT ZATANNA IS A FAKE!

YOUR POOR DEAD MOTHER...

AS FOR WHATEVER REAL POWERS YOU HAVE, THEY'RE ONLY A CURSE TO THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU!

YOUR SAINTED FATHER...

AND ALL THE BROKEN MINDS AND SHATTERED SOULS YOU'VE LEFT IN YOUR PATH!

I CAN'T WAKE UP. SOMETHING IS HOLDING ME IN THE DREAM. AND IT'S NOT JUST FUSELI.

HE'S A PEST, A TRICKSTER. NOT USUALLY THIS VICIOUS OR THIS POWERFUL.

FUSELI! YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T RESIST THIS CHALLENGE! WHO PUT YOU UP TO IT?

LET'S SAY THERE'S SOME LOCAL TALENT WHO WOULD BE HAPPY IF THIS NIGHTMARE LASTED FOREVER.

BROTHER NIGHT. THIS IS HIS GAME

UNLESS I BREAK FUSELI'S CONCENTRATION, THEIR COMBINED POWER WILL HOLD ME HERE PERMANENTLY!

HERE'S EVERYTHING WE GOT, DALE.

GOING ALL THE WAY BACK TO '69. DON'T YOU EVER SLEEP?

NOT WHEN I PULL THE FREAK BEAT. THIS LOOKS LIKE A BAD ONE, ARTIE.

SUPER VILLAINS AGAIN? WHO'S IN TOWN, THE JOKER OR THE BIG GORILLA?

WORSE-- IT'S MAGIC.

OH, YEAH. I HEARD YOU CALLED IN THAT ILLUSIONIST, ZANTANNA. TELL ME SHE'S AS HOT IN PERSON AS SHE IS ON TV.

ZAT-ANNA. AND YOU NEED TO FORM MORE REALISTIC IMAGES OF WOMEN. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE MOUNT DIABLO THIRTEEN?

AH, DALE, IT'S LATE...

COME ON, ARTIE. I WANT TO DOUBLE-CHECK MY NOTES.

I'VE SEEN THE PICTURES, BEEN TO THE SITE--THE ALTAR, THE PITS, HELL, ANY KID WHO GREW UP IN THE BAY AREA HAS BEEN UP THERE, OR READ THE STORY.

RIGHT. BUSLOAD OF KIDS HIJACKED FORTY YEARS AGO BY A DISGRUNTLED FLOWER CHILD TURNED PAGAN CULT LEADER NAMED ELDON PECK.

THREE DAYS LATER, THEY FOUND THE CRAZY BASTARD STAINED WITH BLOOD, THE BODIES OF THIRTEEN KIDS ARRANGED IN THAT WEIRD PATTERN...

WE'VE ALL READ THE STORY, DALE.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE STORY THE CHRONICLE DIDN'T PRINT, ARTIE? THE RUMOR THAT WHEN THE COPS FINALLY ARRESTED PECK, HE SIMPLY WHISPERED ONE WORD AND WALKED AWAY...

...THE COPS STANDING LIKE THEY HAD BEEN TURNED TO STONE.

DETECTIVE COLTON.

I FEAR I'VE CAUSED YOU SOME TROUBLE THIS EVENING.

IS THAT RIGHT, MISTER...?

YOU MAY CALL ME BROTHER NIGHT.

ARTIE, GIVE ME YOUR CUFFS. ARTIE...?

AH. THE DIABLO THIRTEEN. GOOD TIMES.

IT'S LATE, AND I WON'T WASTE YOUR TIME. I KNOW YOU AND THE WITCH ZATANNA ARE INSINUATING YOURSELVES INTO MY BUSINESS. I'M HOPING YOU, AT LEAST, WILL BE MORE REASONABLE.

A GIFT. THREE WANTED MEN WHOM YOU CAN STRIKE FROM YOUR FILES. NEED I SAY THERE COULD BE MORE WHERE THESE CAME FROM?

I'M TAKING CONTROL OF CRIME IN THIS CITY, ON BOTH THE MYSTIC AND MUNDANE LEVELS. SOON, EVERYONE FROM THE LOWLIEST PIMP TO THE HIGHEST DARK WIZARD WILL BE PAYING TRIBUTE TO ME. YOU CAN'T STOP THIS, BUT YOU CAN PROFIT.

INHUMAN SON OF A...

PLEASE, DETECTIVE. DON'T LET EMOTION CLOUD A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL WORKING RELATION-SHIP.

YOU UNDERSTAND THE MYSTIC WORLD. A MAN OF YOUR STATURE WITHIN THE POLICE FORCE WOULD BE OF VALUE TO ME.

GO TO HELL.

EVENTUALLY. FOR NOW I'LL CONTENT MYSELF WITH RUNNING SAN FRANCISCO.

THINK CAREFULLY, COLTON. YOUR ALLIES ARE VANISHING. IT WOULD BEHOOVE YOU TO BE ON THE WINNING SIDE.

DING! DING! DING!

WHAT'S THAT, BELLS? I DIDN'T CALL FOR ANY BELLS!

LET GO!

NOW...!

UH, SORRY, DALE. I MUST HAVE SPACED. YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A RUMOR? DALE?

BEEP...BEEP...

I'M FREE!

AHH!

HEY, IT'S ZEE. KLAT OT EM.

I WARNED YOU, WITCH! PULL ME OUT OF MY WORLD, AND I'LL RIP YOU TO PIECES IN YOURS!

THEN I'LL SIMPLY JUMP INTO A PASSING DREAM AND FLOAT AWAY!

NOW THERE'S A THOUGHT!

ZATANNA, IT'S COLTON. CALL ME AS SOON AS YOU GET THIS.

LLA SREPEELS MAERD FO ILESUF!

ARUGHH! WHAT...HAVE YOU **DONE?**

I KNOW YOU LEAVE A LINGERING SHADOW IN EVERY NIGHTMARE YOU CREATE. I'M SENDING YOU BACK INTO **ALL** OF THEM **AT ONCE.**

YOU'LL... TEAR ME APART...!

SO THE WORLD LOSES ONE MORE NIGHTMARE IMP. SORRY, BUT I CAN'T SEE THE DOWNSIDE.

PLEASE, GREAT GODDESS! MERCY!

HUH, FROM FAKE TO GODDESS IN ONE NIGHT. YOU'RE DOING WONDERS FOR MY MANGLED SELF-ESTEEM.

SPARE ME! I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING! I...PROMISE!

AND THAT'S THE MAGIC WORD!

SREPEELS ESAELER ILESUF!

THIS IS HUMILIATING! YOU CAN'T **DO THIS** TO THE LORD OF NIGHT TERRORS!

SHUT IT, FUSSY. TÉG NI EHT TAH.

NOW TO LOCK YOU UP SOMEPLACE UNTIL I NEED YOU.

OH, NO. NOT THAT.

DNIB EHT NOMED EDISNI.

DALE, IT'S ZEE. I'M OKAY.

THANKS FOR CALLING, *SERIOUSLY.*

I HAD A VISIT FROM OUR PAL BROTHER NIGHT. ALL VERY CORDIAL, BUT I KNOW A THREAT WHEN I GET ONE. YOU WANT TO GET TOGETHER AND DISCUSS?

SURE. COFFEE, TOMORROW MORNING, LATE. *VERY* LATE. NOON.

'NIGHT. TEEWS SMAERD...

SEEMS I UNDERESTIMATED THE GIRL. SHE'S RESOURCEFUL AND COMPLETELY WITHOUT FEAR.

A WORTHY HEIR TO THE ZATARA LEGACY.

I'M ALMOST SORRY YOU'LL HAVE TO DESTROY HER, JOHN.

BUT THAT'S THE DEBT YOU OWE ME FOR SAVING YOUR SOUL FROM OBLIVION!

AS YOU COMMAND, MASTER NIGHT...

The Magician
The Devil

NIGHT ON DEVIL MOUNTAIN

PAUL DINI
writer

STEPHANE ROUX
artist

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX
cover

SNEAKING IN TEN MINUTES BEFORE CURTAIN. VERY PROFESSIONAL ^_^

OF COURSE, YOU ONLY WERE UP HALF THE NIGHT FIGHTING A MURDEROUS DREAM DEMON

THEN YOU SPENT MOST OF THE AFTERNOON WITH DETECTIVE COLTON DISCUSSING THE LATEST ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY BROTHER NIGHT.

CREW ENTRANCE ONLY
STAGE DOOR

ZATANNA

WHAT A JOY TO LEARN THAT MONSTER IS NOW THREATENING COPS. I'M SURE THAT'S ANOTHER MESS I'LL HAVE TO HANDLE

BUT LATER FOR THAT. NOW, SMILE FOR THE CREW. NEVER LET THEM SEE I'M FRAZZLED

SORRY I'M LATE, GANG. DON'T KILL ME.

HMM

FOR A SPLIT-SECOND, I THINK THE KNIFE IS MIKEY'S LAME ATTEMPT AT A JOKE

...UNTIL I REALIZE I'M ABOUT TO BE SLAUGHTERED BY LIVING EFFIGIES OF MY FRIENDS!

ANOTHER SNEAK ATTACK FROM BROTHER NIGHT!

AHH!

LAEH EM!

THE BLADE IS CURSED, OF COURSE! NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO CREATE A PERMANENT WOUND BUT CLOSING IT HURTS LIKE HELL!

USE THE PAIN--PUSH THROUGH IT!

CITSYM TSALB YORTSED SEIGIFFE!

SEIGIFFE NRUB!

DNIWLRIHW TFIL YGIFFE!

BEFORE YOU ARE SPUN BACK INTO LIFELESS STRAW, TELL ME WHERE BROTHER NIGHT TOOK MY FRIENDS!

LLET EM!

DIABLO...

OF COURSE. THE SITE OF THE MONSTER'S GREATEST ATROCITY. THE BIRTHPLACE OF HIS POWER.

THE WITCH IS ON HER WAY. IT'S ONLY FITTING WE END THINGS HERE, ON MT. DIABLO.

FORTY YEARS AGO, I FILLED THOSE GRAVES WITH THE BODIES OF CHILDREN, OFFERINGS TO THE LORDS OF HELL.

IN RETURN, I WAS GIVEN THE POWER TO BECOME THEIR AGENT ON EARTH, BROTHER NIGHT

AND WHILE THE GRAVES HAVE BEEN LONG VACANT, TONIGHT THEY WILL CONTAIN FRESH SACRIFICES.

MY MASTERS WILL LOOK FAVORABLY UPON THIS GIFT, AND AID ME IN THE DESTRUCTION OF OUR ENEMY

LET ME MAKE A BURNT OFFERING OF THEIR BODIES.

NOT TONIGHT, EMBER. IT MUST BE DONE ACCORDING TO RITUAL...

WITH STEEL AND BLOOD.

SERGO EMOCEB ENOTS!

REHTORB THGIN DNA SEILLA LLAF!

STOP HER!

NIGHT RAISED HIS DEFENSES TOO QUICKLY. I'LL HAVE TO BE FASTER TO TAKE

SSALG SLLAW PART EHT REPAHS!

THAT'S BETTER. THE SHAPER CAN'T CHANGE

I HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL JUST FOR YOU!

MISS ZATANNA...

SO DO I, TEDDY.

KNIRHS!

WHAT DID YOU *DO*?!?

JUST PUTTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE, TED.

NOOO!

MY TURN, WITCH. NOW YOU *BURN!*

BEING A DRAGON HATCHING IN A HUMAN "SHELL" IS IMPRESSIVE, UNTIL YOU MEET SOMEONE WHO CAN TURN YOUR BREATH TO WATER.

RETAW.

ENOUGH!

I DON'T NEED UNDERLINGS TO ENSURE YOUR DESTRUCTION!

CITSYM DLEIHS TCETORP SU!

NRUTER TSALB OT THGIN!

SKCOR BMOTNE MIH!

KRUMP!

THAT'LL SLOW HIM DOWN WHILE I CATCH MY BREATH!

DUDE! YOU SLAUGHTERED HIM! SO ***AWESOME!***

IT'D BE MORE AWESOME IF HE STAYED DOWN. I NEED TO GET YOU GUYS BACK TO THE THEATRE.

AND LEAVE YOU TO FIGHT THE BOGEYMAN ***ALONE?*** DON'T THINK SO!

I'VE GOT THIS. BESIDES, TONIGHT'S A SELL-OUT. SOMEONE HAS TO PUT ON THAT SHOW.

WITHOUT OUR STAR? HOW'S ***THAT*** SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?

NO PROBLEM...

SSERD YEKIM EKIL EM!

AW, BOSS! ***REALLY?!***

REALLY. YOU KNOW THE SHOW ORDER, MIKEY. THE BOYS WILL HELP YOU THROUGH THE TRICKS.

I HATE HOW THESE 'NETS RIDE UP!

YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE OKAY?

YEAH. GET GOING.

WERC KCAB OT ERTAEHT.

NO, VLADI, I'M NOT OKAY.

BUT IT'S BETTER YOU AND THE OTHERS WERE SAFELY BACK IN TOWN THAN FACING DEATH BECAUSE OF ME. ESPECIALLY AS NIGHT IS MAKING SHORT

SKCOR MROFER DNUORA...

AHH!

KRRAK!

WE COULD GO ON THROWING BLASTS AT EACH OTHER ALL NIGHT. HOWEVER, I CHOSE TO ASSIGN THAT SORT OF GRUNT WORK TO MY NEWEST LACKEY.

LOOK CLOSELY, MY DEAR. I'M SURE YOU RECOGNIZE HIM...

NO...!

YOUR OWN FATHER, THE GREAT ZATARA!

"OH, YES, YOU'RE REFERRING TO THE MINOR SCUFFLE FOR POWER IN HELL A FEW MONTHS AGO.

"DON'T BE SO SURPRISED. LITTLE HAPPENS IN THE REALM OF THE DAMNED THAT ESCAPES MY NOTICE.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! I SENT MY FATHER'S SOUL INTO OBLIVION!

"I WATCHED THE CONFLICT FROM THE SIDELINES, READY TO ADD MY POWERS TO THE VICTORS SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.

"WHEN I SAW YOU NOBLY TRY TO SPARE ZATARA FURTHER TORMENT BY DESTROYING HIS SOUL, I REACHED OUT UNDETECTED AND SPIRITED AWAY HIS ESSENCE."

THUS HE REMAINS, AN ENTRANCED SHADOW, HIS DREAM-SHROUDED MIND RESPONDING ONLY TO THE VOICE OF HIS MASTER.

KILL HER.

ANNATAZ EID!

DLEIHS EM!

ONCE MORE AN ENEMY SETS MY FATHER AGAINST ME. NEVER AGAIN!

LISTEN WELL, FUSELI! IF YOU EVER WANT TO HAUNT EVEN A DAYDREAM AGAIN, YOU'LL SWEAR AN OATH TO *ME!*

ANYTHING, GODDESS! WHAT MUST THIS MISERABLE SERVANT DO TO WIN HIS LIBERTY?

ENTER THE DREAMS OF THAT ENTRANCED SPIRIT AND WAKE HIM-- GENTLY.

HA. I WAS AFRAID YOU'D ASK FOR SOMETHING HARD!

STAY AWAY FROM HIM, DEMON! THIS IS NOT YOUR FIGHT!

I DISAGREE, BROTHER NIGHT!

UNGH!

THE LORD OF NIGHT TERRORS WILL **ALWAYS** FIGHT FOR HIS FREEDOM!

DREAMS OF THE DEAD, LITTLE MORE THAN DUSTY EMBERS.

AND YET, THERE STILL MAY BE ONE TO FAN BACK INTO LIFE...

THERE! THE FONDEST DREAM A FATHER MAY HAVE...

THE EVERLASTING LOVE OF HIS CHILD.

AWAKE IN PEACE, JOHN ZATARA.

ZATANNA...?

HI, DADDY.

YOU SAVED ME.

DAUGHTER...

UH, ACTUALLY, I DID THAT. ON YOUR KID'S SAY-SO, OF COURSE.

SOOO, AM I DONE HERE?

I RELEASE YOU, ON THE CONDITION YOU NEVER DARKEN MY DREAMS AGAIN.

WITH PLEASURE!

TRAITOROUS IMP! HE'S COST ME THIS BATTLE!

I MUST GO TOO, DEAREST.

I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT FAIR.

I AM NEVER FARTHER THAN A WHISPER WHEN YOU NEED ME.

HAVE TO ESCAPE WHILE SHE'S DISTRACTED.

I'LL RETURN WITH MORE UNDERLINGS AND...

ELDON PECK!

EZEERF.

I THOUGHT I COULD THROW A SCARE INTO BROTHER NIGHT AND HE WOULD BACK DOWN. TONIGHT SHOWED ME HE'LL NEVER STOP UNTIL I AND EVERYONE I CARE ABOUT IS DEAD BY HIS [illegible]

NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

AHH!

YES, THAT IS YOUR TRUE NAME. ELDON PECK, CULT LEADER, NARCISSIST. A POWER-MAD MANIAC BARGAINING WITH FORCES HE COULDN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.

YOU'RE DEAD, DO YOU HEAR ME?!

THIRTEEN CHILDREN WERE SLAUGHTERED TO FEED YOUR EGO. IN RETURN, THE LORDS OF HELL GAVE YOU POWERS THAT, ON A COSMIC LEVEL, ARE NOTHING MORE THAN PARLOR TRICKS.

THIRTEEN SOULS HELD IN BONDAGE, SO YOU COULD STRUT AROUND LIKE A GOD. THERE IS A WAY TO RELEASE THEM.

NO!

RENOUNCE WHAT YOU'VE BECOME AND THEY'LL GO FREE.

AT THE PRICE MY MASTERS DEMAND? *NEVER!*

RENOUNCE. ECNUONER!

GET *OUT* OF MY *MIND!* I...I...

I RENOUNCE *MY POWERS!* I RENOUNCE MY *MASTERS! I RENOUNCE BROTHER NIGHT!*

AND, WITH NIGHT'S BARGAIN *SHATTERED*, THIRTEEN INNOCENT SOULS ROSE FROM HELL AND PASSED INTO ETERNAL PEACE.

I MEANT IT WHEN I TOLD DALE THERE WAS NO HUMAN PUNISHMENT FOR MYSTICAL LAWBREAKERS

Case # 1269-90
PERP E Perk

BUT NOW THAT BROTHER NIGHT HAD BECOME ELDON PECK ONCE MORE

HE COULD AT LAST BE MADE TO ANSWER FOR HIS CRIMES

Case #: 1269-9037-010
PERP: E. Peck
[CLOSED]

ANY JAIL TIME PECK SERVES ON THIS PLANE OF REALITY WILL BE INCONSEQUENTIAL.

YOU SEE, THE LORDS OF HELL DON'T LOOK KINDLY UPON BROKEN BARGAINS

AND WHILE PECK ALWAYS KNEW HE WAS BOUND FOR HELL, HE BELIEVED THE MISERY HE INFLICTED UPON MORTALS WOULD WIN HIM A PLACE AMONG THE RULING ELITE

HIS UNBLINKING GAZE TELLS ME HE'S BEEN GRANTED A PREVIEW OF WHAT REALLY AWAITS HIM IN THE AFTERLIFE

AND HE CAN'T BARGAIN HIS WAY OUT OF THAT.

THE END

ROYAL
GAME!
3718 3538 3113

PLAYING WITH FIRE

PAUL DINI
writer

CHAD HARDIN
penciller

WAYNE FAUCHER
inker

JOHN KALISZ LOVERN KINDZIERSKI
colorists

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX with KARINE BOCCANFUSO

DAD ALWAYS SAID LAS VEGAS WAS A TOUGH TOWN

OF COURSE HE WAS REFERRING TO THE HECKLERS AND DRUNKS, *NOT* THE LOCAL ITERATION OF THE *ROYAL FLUSH GANG*

THOUGH I HAVE TO ADMIT, THE RAT PACK MOTIF IS A CLEVER TOUCH

NORMALLY I'D SAY "COME FLY WITH ME," BUT I DON'T LIKE PUSHY BROADS!

ENAC NRUT OT SREWOLF!

NOW LAND THIS THING BEFORE I MAKE *YOU* SPROUT PETALS!

I WAS CHECKING INTO THE PARADISE RESORT FOR A WEEK'S ENGAGEMENT WHEN THE CHAIRMAN AND HIS CRONIES HIT A HIGH-STAKES POKER TOURNAMENT.

NEXT THING I KNOW, I'M IN A DOGFIGHT ABOVE THE STRIP'S BIGGEST CASINO.

OW!

LEVITATION REQUIRES A LOT OF CONCENTRATION. IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN RIDE AIR CURRENTS OR ANYTHING

I'VE GOT MY *EYE* ON YOU, SWEETS!

COME ON. FOCUS!

SCORE ONE FOR THE CANDY MAN!

NIATNUOF TPURE... HCTAC EM...

THAT'S BETTER!

OKAY! THE PARTY IS *OVER!*

ACE IS PLAYING THE JOLLY DRUNK, FIGURING I'LL WASTE TIME CHANTING A SPELL.

HERE'S AN EYE-OPENER FOR YOU, DISANO!

POW!

YOU LIKE CARD GAMES, CHAIRMAN? TRY MY FAVORITE...

DLOH ME'!

TURN US LOOSE, WITCH, OR YOU'RE RING-A-DING-*DEAD!*

WHATEVER YOU SAY, CHAIRMAN!

ELFFUHS!

KRAKK!

IZZAK!

HINTON

A TOUGH TOWN MAYBE, BUT WHEN THEY LOVE YOU, THEY LOVE

PARADISE CASINO

ZATAN

WHOOP WHOOP

CREDIT

TING TING

TING TING

AHH. I LOVE THAT HAPPY JINGLE.

IT'S GETTING HARDER TO FIND MACHINES THAT PAY OUT REAL COINS.

I KNOW. MOST OF THEM NOW SPIT OUT PIECES OF PAPER.

UGH. IT JUST ISN'T GAMBLING WITHOUT SILVER-STAINED FINGERS.

THERE. THAT'S HER.

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE MUCH. WASTE OF MAMMON'S TIME.

SHE DRESSES LIKE A SLUT, THOUGH. HE LIKES THAT.

WATCH YOUR MOUTH.

OR WHAT? HE'LL FLAY THE SKIN FROM MY BONES? THAT THRILL WORE OFF FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

YOUR PRIZE MONEY, MR. RAYMOND. BACK SAFE AND SOUND.

PLEASE, ZATANNA. MY FATHER WAS MR. RAYMOND.

CALL ME SONNY. AFTER ALL, I DO CONSIDER US FAMILY FRIENDS.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, BENJAMIN RAYMOND BOOKED THE GREAT ZATARA TO HEADLINE HIS FIRST CASINO. I'M THRILLED TO HAVE HIS DAUGHTER HERE TONIGHT TO OPEN THE NEWEST RESORT IN THE RAYMOND DYNASTY.

ESPECIALLY AS SHE PROVIDES HER OWN EXCELLENT STYLE OF SECURITY.

IF I'M IN A POSITION TO STOP TROUBLE, I'LL DO IT. THAT'S THE WAY I WORK.

SO I'VE HEARD.

IN ADDITION TO BEING A MAGICIAN ON CALL WITH THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, YOU ALSO HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO OFFER MYSTICAL PROTECTION TO ORDINARY FOLKS WHO FIND THEMSELVES AT ODDS WITH THE SUPERNATURAL.

I DON'T REMEMBER LISTING ANY OF THAT IN MY PROGRAM BIO.

I MAKE IT MY BUSINESS TO LEARN EVERYTHING I CAN ABOUT PEOPLE I FIND FASCINATING.

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING ABOUT YOU I *DON'T* KNOW. ONE QUESTION I'VE BEEN *DYING* TO ASK.

ARE YOU ASKING ME OUT?

THAT DEPENDS. ARE YOU GOING TO SAY YES?

NORMALLY, I DON'T MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE, BUT I SUPPOSE WE COULD MEET FOR A DRINK AFTER THE SHOW...IN MEMORY OF OUR FATHERS, OF COURSE.

I'M SURE THEY'D APPROVE.

UNTIL THEN.

I'LL COUNT THE MINUTES.

WELL?

INTERESTING.

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MAGIC USERS ON THE PLANET AND ALL YOU SAY IS "INTERESTING"?

I ASSUME YOU SAW THE WAY SHE HANDLED THE ROYAL FLUSH GANG. I PRACTICALLY LEFT THE FRONT DOOR OPEN FOR THEM TO ATTACK MY POKER TOURNAMENT.

COMMON THIEVES. HARDLY A CHALLENGE FOR A NOVICE, LET ALONE THE DAUGHTER OF THE WIZARD ZATARA.

I KNEW THE OLD MAN. HIS DAUGHTER IS EVERYTHING HE WAS AND MORE.

I'VE ALREADY POSITIONED AGENTS TO TEST HER. ONLY THEIR FAILURE WILL PROVE SHE'S AS POWERFUL AS YOU SAY.

AND IF SHE BEATS THEM, WE HAVE A DEAL?

AH, BENJAMIN. STILL COWERING IN TERROR OF TICKING CLOCKS. YOU DO REALIZE IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY KINDLY FLAW OF GRANTING YOU EXTENSIONS, I'D HAVE HAD YOU YEARS AGO?

YOU'RE BREAKING MY HEART. DO WE HAVE A DEAL?

TO ACQUIRE A SOUL THAT PURE? ABSOLUTELY.

LAS VEGAS'S MOST ELIGIBLE BILLIONAIRE, AND LOOK WHO HAS HIM TUCKED AWAY IN HER TOP HAT.

IT'S JUST DRINKS, ARNIE. IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE HITTING THE 24-HOUR WEDDING CHAPEL.

TIME ME.

GO.

AND...?

TWENTY-EIGHT SECONDS. A NEW PERSONAL BEST.

MMMF. LAME. ***SCOTT FREE*** COULD DO IT IN ***TWELVE.***

MAYBE IF I SET THE JACKET ***ON FIRE...***

INCREDIBLE. YOU HAVE A DATE WITH SONNY RAYMOND AND ALL YOU CAN THINK ABOUT IS SELF-IMMOLATION.

YOU HAVE TO BE A *LITTLE* DAZZLED BY THE MONEY, THE POWER, THE LOOKS. HELL, IF HE SWUNG MY WAY, I'D BE ON HIM IN A HEARTBEAT.

BETTER NOT LET ANDRE HEAR YOU SAY THAT. IT WOULD BREAK HIS HEART, AND THEN I WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING WICKED TO YOU.

LIKE SWITCH MANAGERS?

I WAS THINKING PLAGUE OF BOILS, BUT YEAH, THAT WORKS.

HEY, GANG. I GOT THE CRITTERS SQUARED AWAY FOR TONIGHT'S SHOW, BUT I'M HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW RABBIT.

WHAT'S WRONG, ANDRE? THE LITTLE GUY'S STILL NOT EATING?

NOT MUCH. HE ONLY TAKES ONE BITE OF EACH CARROT, THEN SNIFFS AT IT LIKE IT'S SUPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING.

LUCKY'S THE OFFSPRING OF ONE OF MY DOES AND A BROWN STRAY I PICKED UP IN GOLDEN GATE PARK. HE'S KIND OF AN ODDBALL.

THAT'S OUR Z'ANNA. ALWAYS READY TO WELCOME ANY MISFIT, HUMAN OR OTHERWISE.

THOUGH IF WE DON'T GET THROUGH THIS DRESS REHEARSAL, WE MAY NEED A NEW PLACE TO BE.

YOU HEARD BOSS WITCH. PLACES, PEOPLE.

MANY HOURS LATER...

I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH I HATE TWELVE-HOUR RUN-THROUGHS. WELL, AT LEAST THE NEW SHOW IS PASSABLE, IF NOT ACTUALLY KIND OF...

THOOM THOOM THOOM

OH, GOOD! SOME CLOWN HAS THE BASS CRANKED UP IN THE SUITE NEXT TO MINE! WONDER HOW HE'D LIKE A STAMPEDE OF ELEPHANTS THROUGH HIS BEDROOM?

THOOM

WAIT, THAT'S NOT MY NEIGHBOR, THAT'S...

THOOM

THOOM

OH, NO.

ZACHARY. I AM GOING TO MURDER YOU.

WELCOME TO VEGAS

EXCUSE ME. I'M LOOKING FOR MY COUSIN. AN OILY LITTLE WEASEL NAMED ZACH...

BLARG...!

OKAY, THEN.

HI, LADIES. HAVE YOU SEEN...

THE COCKTAIL WAITRESS IS HERE, THANK GOD!

ABOUT TIME. GIMME ANOTHER MOJITO.

RUM 'N COKE, NO ICE.

CERTAINLY. LET ME CONJURE UP ONE OF MY SPECIALS...

SLRIG NRUT OTNI SEVOD!

COO COO COO COO COO

YOU TURNED THEM INTO BIRDS...

UH-HUH. I'M GOOD WITH *FROGS*, TOO.

WHO TURNED OFF THE MUSIC? THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A PARTY, DAMNIT...!

OH. HEY, ZEE.

HEY, ZACH.

DON'T BE MAD. I WANTED TO THROW YOU A WELCOME PARTY, AND THINGS KINDA GOT...UM...

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIRLS?

LAST I SAW THEY WERE HEADED SOUTH FOR THE WINTER. WHICH REMINDS ME...

SEVOD NRUT KCAB OTNI SLRIG.

AAAIEE!

SPLASH!

WHAT WAS IN THOSE DRINKS?!

AWESOME! PROMISE YOU'LL TEACH ME HOW TO DO THAT. IT WOULD SAVE A LOT OF UNCOMFORTABLE "MORNING AFTER" TALK.

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING LIKE A NAGGY OLDER COUSIN, ZACH...

AND YOU ARE.

AZZIP.

THERE *IS* A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USING OUR POWERS TO RESTORE KARMIC BALANCE AND SHOWING OFF FOR THE LAS VEGAS BRAT PACK.

MAGIC SHOULD BE USED DEFENSIVELY ONLY.

TELL THAT TO THE ROYAL FLUSH GANG. YOUR FIGHT WAS ALL OVER LAST NIGHT'S NEWS. NICE BOW AT THE END, BY THE WAY.

PIZZA TRY THE BEST!

IF SOMEONE CAUSES INNOCENTS UNDUE GRIEF, THEN THEY BECOME FAIR GAME. LIKE THOSE CROOKS, OR MOST OF THE OTHER ENEMIES I'VE FOUGHT.

AND THE SOPPING WET BIRD-GIRLS UPSET THE BALANCE OF KARMA HOW?

THEY PISSED ME OFF.

HEY! THE SORCERESS SUPREME IS A HUMAN BEING AFTER ALL. I KNEW YOU MADE UP THOSE RULES AS YOU WENT ALONG.

ZACH, AT THIS POINT, ALL I REALLY KNOW IS I NEED A SHOWER AND A THREE-HOUR NAP.

YEAH, ABOUT THAT...

ZACH, HONEY...

I'M OUT OF SHAMPOO.

OH! MISS ZATANNA! I-I'M SORRY! I DIDN'T MEAN TO...

CALM DOWN, BUNNY.

EHTOLC REH.

OH! TH-THANK YOU!

DON'T MENTION IT. JUST GO.

NOW.

C'MON, BUNS. CUZ NEEDS HER BEAUTY SLEEP.

BYE. SORRY ABOUT THE MESS...

FREAKIN' KIDS...

MY HAIR'S STILL WET.

BE GRATEFUL YOU STILL HAVE A HEAD.

DO NOT DISTURB

EXCUSE US, LADIES.

YOU'RE FINE, SWEETIE.

SUCH A NICE BOY.

YOUNG.

POWERFUL.

A NOVICE, THOUGH.

GREEN.

UNDISCIPLINED.

NO CHALLENGE AT ALL.

HOUSEKEEPING.

BOO-YAH. FRESH TOWELS AT LAST.

WHOOOM

I'M JUST GUESSING BUT, NO MINT ON MY PILLOW TONIGHT?

UNWORTHY TRICKSTER. MAMMON HAS SEEN FIT TO GRANT YOU DEATH AT OUR HANDS.

MAMMON, HUH? WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I DID TO RILE UP HELL'S LORD OF ***AVARICE***, BUT I HAVE A SOLD-OUT SHOW IN A COUPLE HOURS, SOOO...

DNIW ESUOD ERIF SNOMED!

FOOL. NO EARTHLY WIND CAN EXTINGUISH OUR FLAMES.

RETAW NWORD MEHT!

NOR COMMON WATER HARM US.

FSSSSH!

AND THE HUMAN APPROACH IS A STRIKEOUT, TOO.

IDIOT.

OW! THAT DOES IT!

ERIF SNOMED EGNAHC OT...

HER WITLESS CHANTING ANNOYS ME.

AGREED.

LET'S SEE YOU MUMBLE YOUR SPELLS...

UNGH! N-NO...!

AFTER WE'VE BURNED THE TONGUE FROM YOUR MOUTH.

DOUBLE OR NOTHING

PAUL DINI
writer

CHAD HARDIN
penciller

WAYNE FAUCHER
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX with KARINE BOCCANFUSO
cover

LOOK AT HER WRITHE!

LORD MAMMON WILL BE PLEASED!

SO I'M ALL SET TO SHOWER AND SNOOZE WHEN THREE FLAMING HARPIES TORCH MY SUITE AND PUMP ME FULL OF HELLFIRE!

IF I OPEN MY MOUTH TO CHANT A SPELL, THE FIRE WILL CONSUME ME. IF I DON'T, I'LL BURN FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

THEN AGAIN, THERE ARE ALWAYS *OPTIONS*...

MY LUNGS WERE ON FIRE--LITERALLY! I CAN'T TAKE A SECOND CHANCE WITH THESE DEMONS!

YLF NWOD OT LOOP!

EXCUSE ME, FATHER. COULD YOU DO A FAVOR FOR A NICE CATHOLIC GIRL?

HER ONLY DEFENSE IS TO RUN.

SHE'S NOT AS POWERFUL AS MASTER MAMMON BELIEVES.

STILL, WE'LL HONOR OUR BARGAIN AND KILL...

HEY, CUZ. JUST WANT TO APOLOGIZE ONE MORE TIME...

...ABOUT... THE PARTY...

CRACK!

ECI LLAW RAEPPA!

INFANT TRICKSTER. THAT WON'T STOP US LONG.

...PER DOMINUM, AMEN.

BLESS YOU, PADRE. I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.

COMMON WATER CAN'T HARM THEM, BUT I'M BETTING THIS WILL!

YLOH RETAW NWORD ERIF SNOMED!

AAAHHH!

FSSSH!

ARE YOU *REALLY* CATHOLIC?

HONESTLY? I'M A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING.

ZACH?

I CAME BACK TO APOLOGIZE AND GOT BAPTIZED.

SORRY. I NEEDED SOMETHING TO THROW AT THOSE DEVILS, AND A POOL OF HOLY WATER WAS THE BEST OPTION.

WHO WERE THEY?

MINOR ELEMENTALS SENT BY THE DEMON ***MAMMON.***

RIAPER.

THE GOD OF AVARICE? WHAT DID YOU DO TO PISS HIM OFF?

NO IDEA. THOUGH IT'S OBVIOUS HE HAS A BIG GRUDGE AGAINST ME.

OF COURSE. ONLY THE VILEST OF UNHOLY HOSTS COME GUNNING FOR MY CELEBRITY COUSIN. SHALL WE DO THE SUPERHERO TEAM-UP THING AND TRACK HIM DOWN?

NO, HE'LL SHOW HIS HAND AGAIN AND I'LL DEAL WITH HIM MYSELF. BESIDES, YOU ALMOST SOUND JEALOUS.

HEY, I KNOW THERE'S NO DANGER SOME FIEND WILL YANK ***ME*** SCREAMING INTO THE PIT. NOT WHILE I'M DOING THREE SHOWS AT SOME TOILET OF A CASINO DOWNTOWN...

HERE WE GO...

...AND MY FAMOUS AND BELOVED COUSIN IS SELLING OUT THE PARADISE.

ZACH, YOU CAN'T KEEP JUDGING YOUR CAREER BY HOW YOU SEE MINE. YOU'RE A WONDERFUL MAGICIAN.

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?

YOU ROUTINELY FIGHT DEMONS THAT CAN BURN YOU TO CINDERS, BUT YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO ONE OF YOUR OWN COUSIN'S SHOWS.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. YOUR OPENING NIGHT IN CHICAGO...

YOU SENT FLOWERS AND AN APOLOGY. SOMETHING ABOUT DEATHSTROKE ATTACKING THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.

OH, GOD, THAT'S RIGHT, THAT HORRIBLE BUSINESS WITH POOR RALPH AND SUE.

IT'S FUNNY, GROWING UP, YOU WERE THE ONLY MEMBER OF MY FAMILY I COULD RELATE TO.

...THEN, ONCE I STARTED ON MY OWN, THERE WAS HARDLY A WORD FROM YOU. WHEN DO YOU START MAKING THAT RIGHT?

ZACH, I COULD SAY THAT LIFE GOT IN THE WAY, THE PERFORMING, THE HEROICS, BUT THAT'S YOUR LIFE, TOO.

YEAH, BUT AT LEAST I MADE AN EFFORT TO RECONNECT. TRUE, IT DIDN'T GO LIKE I PLANNED...

I REMEMBER YOU SITTING WITH ME FOR HOURS, TEACHING ME THE ZOMBIE BALL, THE INDIAN ROPE TRICK...

IT WAS VERY SWEET. AND I PROMISE ONCE I'M DONE HERE, I'LL BE THERE TO SEE YOUR LATE SHOW.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO...

I *WANT* TO. SAVE ME A FRONT ROW SEAT.

DEAL.

OT YM GNISSERD MOOR.

EXCUSE ME, MISS ZATARA. WE SAW THE CONFLICT OUTSIDE. ARE YOU OKAY?

SURE. FINE. WHY?

AH... JUST CHECKING.

HELL.

LOOK AT YOURSELVES. SHRIVELED BY THE OLD HOLY WATER TRICK. PATHETIC.

PLEASE, GREAT MAMMON! MERCY! WE BEG YOU!

SORRY. I KNEW YOU ONLY HAD A ONE-IN-TEN CHANCE AGAINST THE MAGICIAN, BUT IT SETS A BAD PRECEDENT FOR THE OTHER MINIONS.

AAHHH!

EVEN WE SUFFER IN THESE FLAMES!

THERE'S NO PROFIT IN FAILURE, GIRLS.

I DIDN'T BECOME THE WEALTHIEST DEMON IN HELL BY BACKING LOSERS.

LOOKS LIKE MY ACOLYTE IN LAS VEGAS, BENJY RAYMOND, HAS EARNED HIMSELF ANOTHER STAY OF EXECUTION.

PROVIDING HE DELIVERS ZATANNA'S SOUL TO ME, OF COURSE.

THAT'S THE ONLY "CURRENCY" WORTH ACQUIRING HERE, THOSE IMMORTAL ESSENCES HUMANS ARE SO WILLING TO TRADE.

A SOUL LIKE ZATANNA'S WOULD EASILY BE THE PRIZE OF MY COLLECTION.

I'D NEED A BOTTLE FIVE TIMES THIS SIZE FOR HER ALONE.

MAYBE I'LL HELP BENJY CLOSE THE DEAL.

MR. RAYMOND, THERE'S A COWPOKE AT TABLE SEVEN WINNING BIG.

WELL, YIPPIE-KI-YAY FOR HIM. HOW BIG?

SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND BIG.

LOOKIE THERE, DARLIN'. ANOTHER WINNER.

GOT A LUCKY STREAK GOING HERE, PARDNER?

DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND MOSEY ON HOME.

BUT THE CARDS ARE JUST GETTING HOT, BENJY-BOY!

YOU! BUT...

DON'T BE SHOCKED. I'VE BEEN A REGULAR SINCE THIS PLACE OPENED!

THAT DEAL WE MADE WAY BACK IN '47 GAVE ME A SILENT PARTNERSHIP IN ALL YOUR CLUBS, INCLUDING THIS NEW ONE, BENJY.

I LOOK IN FROM TIME TO TIME, THROUGH RANDOM EYES.

HAVE TO PROTECT MY INVESTMENT, YOU KNOW.

YOU HAVE TO BE CONCERNED, BENJY. YOUR TIME IS RUNNING OUT. YOU CAN'T KEEP POSING AS YOUR OWN SON MUCH LONGER.

ZATANNA IS BOOKED THROUGH THE WEEK. I'LL HAVE HER BY THEN.

SHE'S JUST PROVING A LITTLE TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT.

THAT RIGHT? TOO BAD THE TWO OF YOU AREN'T MARRIED. I ALWAYS GAVE YOU GENEROUS EXTENSIONS FOR THE SOULS OF YOUR EX-WIVES.

IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

I BELIEVE YOU. AND TO SHOW YOU WHAT FAITH I HAVE IN YOU, I'M UP FOR MAKING OUR BET MORE INTERESTING.

STAYING OUT OF HELL IS INTERESTING ENOUGH, THANKS.

C'MON. YOU'RE A GAMBLING MAN. YOU'LL LIKE THIS ONE.

GET ME ZATANNA BY MIDNIGHT TONIGHT, AND NOT ONLY WILL I FREE YOU FROM OUR LITTLE CONTRACT, I'LL ALSO THROW IN IMMORTALITY AND EVERLASTING YOUTH.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

JUST THE STANDARD. IF YOU DON'T DELIVER HER SOUL BEFORE 12:01, ALL BETS ARE OFF AND I TAKE YOU TONIGHT.

DOUBLE OR NOTHING. MY FAVORITE GAME.

SUCKER BET. NO DEAL.

WOULD I CHEAT MY FAVORITE PARTNER?

IT'S TOO RISKY. I'D NEED MORE TIME. NO WAY COULD I GUARANTEE DELIVERY BY MIDNIGHT.

OH, I'D GIVE YOU A SPORTING CHANCE. 100% GUARANTEED.

ALL YOU'LL NEED IS A DOZEN ROSES.

TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY IN THE DAZZLING DILEMMA OF "THE ASSISTANT'S REVENGE!"

ONLY ONE ENCORE TONIGHT, VLADI. I HAVE TO GET TO ZACH'S SHOW. I PROMISED.

GOTCHA, ZEE.

WHOOSH!

AND *THAT* IS WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER TRY TO UPSTAGE A MAGICIAN!

THANK YOU, LAS VEGAS! GOOD NIGHT!

OH! HELLO, SONNY.

YOU WERE AMAZING! HERE, THESE ARE FOR YOU.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE.

OKAY, YOU'VE GUSHED ENOUGH. NOW GET TO ZACH'S SHOW.

MMM. INTERESTING SCENT.

NONSENSE. A STAR OF YOUR BRILLIANCE DESERVES BEAUTIFUL THINGS.

OH, SONNY... YOU'RE SO SWEET...

JEEZ, GIRL. THEY'RE ONLY FLOWERS. WHAT'S UP WITH YOU?

SO, I TAKE IT THAT MEANS WE'RE STILL ON FOR DRINKS TONIGHT?

OF COURSE! ANYTHING FOR YOU...

UH, YOUR COUSIN'S SHOW... HELLO?

ZEE, REMEMBER-- THEY'RE HOLDING A SEAT FOR YOU AT ZACH'S SHOW. IT'S GONNA START SOON--

ZACH HAS LOTS OF SHOWS. I'LL CATCH THE NEXT ONE.

FAMILIES, WHO CAN FIGURE THEM?

AND HERE'S THE LOVELY BUNNY, BACK IN ONE PIECE!

AND NOW, I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU ONE OF THE FIRST TRICKS I EVER MASTERED, TAUGHT TO ME BY SOMEONE SPECIAL.

IT'S A SIMPLE BIT OF LEGERDEMAIN, ONE THAT ANY KID CAN DO...

WHICH IS WHY I WON'T BE WASTING YOUR TIME WITH IT.

WHAT'S WRONG?

NOTHING.

SO, WHO WANTS TO SEE ME STICK A NEEDLE THROUGH MY TONGUE?

HOME SWEET HOME.

OH, SONNY, IT'S *BEAUTIFUL!* I MEAN, JUST GORGEOUS!

YIKES. DOESN'T HE KNOW IT'S NOT STILL 1963?

THANK YOU.

THANK *YOU.* I CAN'T IMAGINE A MORE PERFECT NIGHT!

UH...YEAH, ACTUALLY I CAN. AND IT INVOLVES NOT ALIENATING MY COUSIN AGAIN.

I'M REALLY GLAD YOU AGREED TO COME OUT WITH ME TONIGHT, ZEE. CAN I CALL YOU ZEE?

HELL, NO. WAIT

MHM.

WHY AM I DOING THIS? PRACTICALLY DROOLING OVER A GUY I BARELY KNOW

GOOD. THAT MEANS WE'RE GETTING CLOSER. I'VE GROWN VERY FOND OF YOU, YOU KNOW.

I LIKE YOU TOO, SONNY-HONEY.

"SONNY-HONEY"!?

HEH.

OK, THAT TEARS IT. I'M GOOFED ON SOMETHING

WE'LL HAVE TO WORK ON PET NAMES.

WHATEVER YOU SAY, SHMOOPIE.

WHAT'S HE...? THAT ROSE...

THOSE ROSES HE GAVE ME SMELLED...UNEARTHLY. MORE WENT INTO MAKING THEM THAN SUN AND WATER.

AND I'LL BET WHATEVER IT WAS CAME OUT OF THAT SAME VIAL.

IT MUST BE SOME LOVE POTION.

HERE, GORGEOUS. YOU LOOK THIRSTY.

AW. YOU'RE SO SWEET TO ME...

IT'S LIKE BEING IN A DREAM, DETACHED FROM MY BODY. GOT TO CLEAR MY HEAD!

C'MON, ZEE! SHAKE IT OFF!

DRINK UP, LOVE.

WAKE UP, STUPID!

DRINK IT.

WAKE UP

EKAW PU!

KSSHH

A MYSTIC ROOFIE-- REALLY? NOT SMART, "SONNY-HONEY."

I'M PULLING MY SHOW FROM YOUR HOTEL, AND YOU ARE GOING TO SPEND THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AS EITHER A PIG OR A TOAD!

POSSIBLY A SLUG!

INTERESTING, BUT I'VE MADE OTHER PLANS.

SEE, I'M REALLY ***BENJAMIN*** RAYMOND. FOR THE LAST SIXTY YEARS, I'VE BEEN SENDING INNOCENT SOULS TO HELL IN ORDER TO EXTEND MY LIFE AND MAINTAIN POWER HERE IN VEGAS.

WHAT ARE THEY?

THE CORPSES OF ASSORTED WIVES, LOVERS, AND EMPLOYEES FROM OVER THE DECADES. I FIXED IT WITH SOME POWERFUL PEOPLE THAT NO ONE REALLY LEAVES MY SERVICE, NOT EVEN IN DEATH.

UGH--!

YAWA!

EIBMOZ SNOMED NRUT OT...

UMMGH!

MMPH!

OH, THIS WON'T END WELL.

YOU HURT ME, ZEE.

SEE, I THOUGHT WE HAD A REALLY NICE THING GOING THERE FOR A WHILE.

FORTUNATELY, I KNOW HOW WE CAN GET IT BACK.

NOITOP NRUT OT RETAW!

YOU HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT YOU JUST COST ME!

LET ME MAKE IT UP TO YOU.

UFFF!

ELBAT YLF! KCONK MEHT KCAB!

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I REALLY DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS THE HARD WAY.

AHH!

THE POTION.. IT WAS STILL ON THE THORNS

IT'S IN ME

BE A GOOD GIRL NOW AND SLEEP.

THAT'S BEEN QUITE ENOUGH OF THAT. AND NOW, DEMONS, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND...

...MAKE MY BRIDE READY FOR OUR WEDDING.

MARRIED IN VEGAS

PAUL DINI
writer

JESUS SAIZ
artist

JOHN KALISZ

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX with KARINE BOCCANFUSO

LAS VEGAS. TEN MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT.

AWESOME SHOW, ZACH!

YEAH...

THREE STANDING OVATIONS!

I CAN COUNT.

THIS TIME TOMORROW, YOU ARE GOING TO *OWN* LAS VEGAS!

HEAR, HEAR!

YOU'RE SO CUTE. CAN YOU MAKE MY BOYFRIEND DISAPPEAR? HEE-HEE!

KEEP UP THAT MORONIC GIGGLING AND YOU WON'T NEED ME.

HEY!

ZACH? WHAT'S WRONG? YOU JUST GAVE ONE OF THE BEST PERFORMANCES OF YOUR LIFE! EVERYONE WANTS TO CONGRATULATE YOU!

NOT EVERYONE.

I'M SORRY ZATANNA WAS A NO-SHOW... AGAIN.

BUT REALLY, WHEN HAS YOUR COUSIN EVER MADE GOOD ON A PROMISE TO YOU?

IT'S MY FAULT. I LET HER SUCKER ME INTO THINKING SHE'D COME THROUGH. I WORKED HARD FOR THIS NIGHT. THIS PARTY IS FOR ME.

THAT'S RIGHT.

THOSE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO REALLY CARE ABOUT ME.

YES THEY DO.

S'ANNATAZ GNISSERD MOOR!

OH, ZACH...!

SO WHAT'S THE EXCUSE THIS TIME, CUZ? JUSTICE LEAGUE EMERGENCY? GIRLS' NIGHT OUT WITH BLACK CANARY?

OR YOU FIGURED, "HEY, IT'S JUST ZACH. I CAN JUST CATCH UP WITH HIM WHENEVER."

ZEE'S NOT HERE, ZACH. SHE WENT OFF WITH SONNY RAYMOND.

SHE DITCHED ME FOR A DATE?

DURING REHEARSAL SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO HAVE A DRINK WITH HIM. DIDN'T SEEM LIKE ANY BIG THING.

SHE WAS RUNNING TO MAKE YOUR SHOW, THEN SHE DID AN ABOUT-FACE AND SPLIT WITH SONNY.

DAMN IT, ZEE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

THIS IS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE!

I'VE NEVER HAD MUCH LUCK IN LOVE. I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WAS KARMA'S TRADE-OFF FOR ALL MY OTHER GIFTS

WHAT A FOOL I WAS TO DOUBT.

MR. RAYMOND?

NOW I'M ABOUT TO MARRY A WONDERFUL MAN. A WONDERFUL MAN I JUST MET. WHAT KIND OF SENSE DOES THAT...

NOW JUST BANISH THAT NEGATIVITY, MY GIRL. SEE ONLY ROSES NOT THE THORNS

THORNS... SOMETHING ABOUT THORNS

ALL MY BEST FRIENDS ARE HERE. CLARK, LOIS, BRUCE...IS THAT A TRACE OF REGRET I SEE BEHIND THAT STEELY SMILE? I HOPE SO

RALPH AND SUE. THEY'RE NOT DEAD ANYMORE. GOOD FOR THEM.

AND THERE HE IS, MY MAN, MY EVERYTHING. SONNY RAYMOND, THE MAN WHO STOLE MY HEART AND SOUL.

STOLE ME COMPLETELY FOREVER

LET HER GO!

IT SEEMS WE HAVE A WEDDING CRASHER.

ZACH, PLEASE DON'T MAKE A SCENE.

HAVE A SEAT AND I'LL SEE YOU AT THE RECEPTION.

ZATANNA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LOOK AROUND YOU!

EVERYONE'S *DEAD!*

EXCUSE ME. I KNOW HOW STRESSFUL WEDDINGS CAN BE ON FAMILY MEMBERS. IF I MAY PLAY PEACEMAKER HERE...

ZAAK!

NOW. IF WE MAY CONTINUE. DO YOU, ZATANNA ZATARA...

...TAKE BENJAMIN RAYMOND TO BE YOUR ETERNALLY WEDDED HUSBAND?

I...

ANNATAZ! EKAW...

ZACH?

SAY "I DO," MY LOVE.

...

NRUB!

OW!

HE CALLED YOU BENJAMIN RAYMOND! I GET IT NOW!

EVAEL MIH!

I ADJURE THE DEAD TO REVEAL THE TRUTH! NAME THIS MAN!

HE IS MY HUSBAND, BENJAMIN RAYMOND.

AND MINE.

AND MINE.

AND HOW LONG DID EACH OF YOU LIVE IN WEDDED BLISS WITH MR. RAYMOND?

ONLY SECONDS... BEFORE WE WERE TRADED TO LORD MAMMON.

OUR YOUTH TAKEN TO EXTEND BENJAMIN'S.

OUR SOULS FOR HIS.

AND NOW YOU ARE MINE, TOO!

OH, I DON'T THINK SO.

KRAK

YAWA! YOU HAVE NO POWER OVER ME!

I'VE MADE NO WILLING BARGAIN WITH YOU!

A TECHNICALITY. YOU STILL BEND TO MY TOUCH.

UH, ZEE?!

LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN YOU GROVEL AT THE ALTAR OF MAMMON.

TING! TING!

TING!

TING!

TING!

IDIOTS PAY MILLIONS TO WATCH YOUR LITTLE TRICKS.

MILLIONS?

IT'S A LIVING.

YOU MAKE MILLIONS?!

HE'S EXAGGERATING!

HE'S THE DEMON GOD OF WEALTH. I THINK HE'D KNOW!

ARE YOU GOING TO HELP SAVE US OR NOT?

FOCUS ON THAT SLOT MACHINE!

KRAK

ENIHCAM EKIRTS NOMMAM!

RETTACS!

HOPEFULLY THIS WILL BUY US A FEW SECONDS!

EVOM STOLS!

SPEAKING OF "BUYING," DID YOU KNOW I'M *PAYING* TO PUT ON *MY* SHOW? "FOURWALLING," WE POOR MAGICIANS CALL IT!

LOOK, ZACH, MY FEE DOESN'T GO AS FAR AS YOU THINK. I HAVE A HUGE CAST AND CREW, PLUS ANIMALS...

AND THE MANSIONS IN BOTH FRISCO AND GOTHAM...

OH. HERE WE GO...!

AND HOW MANY CARS? THE VAN, THE PORSCHE...

YOU *TOTALED* THE PORSCHE, REMEMBER?!

HOW COULD I FORGET? YOU SENT ME THE REPAIR BILL! YOU COULDN'T JUST ZAP UP A NEW ONE?

WE ARE *NOT* HAVING THIS CONVERSATION NOW!

CRASSH!!

LOVED ONES FIGHTING OVER MONEY. THERE IS NO SWEETER SOUND TO MY EARS.

WHILE IT'S TRUE I CAN'T LAY CLAIM TO YOUR SOULS TONIGHT, I WILL ENJOY THE DISCORD I'VE SOWN.

EVEN AMONG THE "INCORRUPTIBLE," MY PRESENCE ALWAYS FANS THE FIRES OF RESENTMENT.

I SEE IT GLOWING BRIGHTEST IN YOU.

YOU CAN'T HIDE THAT DESPERATE GLINT IN YOUR EYES.

IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE ENVY LEADS YOU RIGHT INTO MY HANDS.

DON'T LISTEN, ZACH. DEMONS SEE ONLY THEIR OWN WARPED VIEW OF HUMANITY.

YOU'RE WELL-SCHOOLED IN OUR WAYS, ZATANNA. YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN A FINE PRIZE.

BUT RIGHT NOW, I WILL CONTENT MYSELF WITH A MAN WHOSE TIME HAS FINALLY RUN OUT.

YOUR HOUR IS ON YOU, BENJAMIN RAYMOND.

NO! NOT YET!

I STILL HAVE TIME!

BUT SADLY, NOTHING LEFT TO BARGAIN WITH.

HAVE MERCY! THIS CASINO, THIS *WHOLE TOWN,* I BUILT IT AS A MONUMENT TO YOU!

AND DON'T THINK I'M NOT GRATEFUL.

BUT WE HAD A WAGER AND YOU LOST. YOU KNOW THE HOUSE RULES, BENJAMIN.

SRAC EKIRTS NOMMAM!

VROOOM!

SKREEE!

WINNER TAKES...EH?

CRASSH! WHOOM!

ZACH?

HOW'S *THAT* FOR *DESPERATE,* MONEYBAG?

WAIT, PLEASE...!

HELP ME! I BEG YOU! DON'T LET THAT MONSTER TAKE ME!

HELP, RIGHT. LIKE THE WAY YOU WOULD HAVE HELPED MY COUSIN IF SHE WERE IN YOUR PLACE.

OH WAIT, SHE WAS.

C'MON, CUZ.

FORGIVE ME! YOU WERE MY ONLY HOPE!

I'M SORRY! I ALWAYS THOUGHT THERE'D BE AN OUT! A LAST-MINUTE ESCAPE!

FROM *MAMMON?* NEVER. AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT A HUMAN SOUL TO BET, HE'LL FIND A WAY TO CLAIM IT.

THEN *OBLITERATE* IT! MAKE ME SOMETHING WITHOUT A SOUL! THERE'S STILL TIME!

YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT.

I DO! BETTER TO BE NOTHING THAN A SOUL IN ETERNAL TORMENT!

YOU HARDLY DESERVE SUCH KINDNESS.

BUT...IF YOU ARE THAT WILLING TO RENOUNCE ALL THAT YOU ARE...ALL THAT YOU EVER WILL BE, IN THIS LIFE OR ANY OTHER...

I AM!

BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG

MIDNIGHT...

TIME TO CASH OUT.

I'LL HAVE RAYMOND. WHERE IS HE?

HE STANDS HERE BEFORE YOU, LORD MAMMON...

A SOLID, SOULLESS, LUMP OF GOLD.

WHOA. YOU REALLY WENT ALL "SPECTRE" ON HIS ASS.

SHUT UP, ZACH.

AND THE RATIONALE YOU HAVE FOR ROBBING ME OF MY PRIZE IS...?

I'M SURE TO A LORD OF HELL, ANOTHER HUMAN SOUL WOULD BE MERELY AN INSECT TO TORTURE.

TORTURE'S GOOD. I'M A BIG FAN OF TORTURE.

NATURALLY! BUT IN THIS STATE, RAYMOND BECOMES MUCH MORE--A MONUMENT TO GREED.

YALPSID RAEPPA!

WHAT MORTAL COULD LOOK UPON SUCH A TREASURE AND NOT FEEL HIS SOUL TWIST WITH DESIRE?

HM. TO GAZE AT ITS UNTOUCHABLE LUSTER AND DREAM OF RICHES FOREVER DENIED, THE GOLD BUG CLAWING IN A MILLION MINDS...

YES.

WELL DONE, MAGICIANS. I APPROVE.

BUT ONLY BECAUSE IT AMUSED ME TO DO SO.

WE'LL MEET AGAIN, ZATARAS. BET ON IT!

I GUESS THAT FINISHES YOUR CONTRACT WITH RAYMOND.

YEAH, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO HAVE A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP WITH A LUMP OF METAL.

ZACH, THANKS. I OWE YOU EVERYTHING.

OH, HEY, WHAT'S FAMILY FOR, RIGHT?

SO YOU'LL BE HEADING HOME TO SAN FRANCISCO TOMORROW, THEN?

NO, THE DAY AFTER. SOMEONE TOLD ME ABOUT THIS FANTASTIC NEW ACT AND I'M DYING TO SEE IT.

REALLY? WHO IS IT?

OH, WELL...IF YOU WANT TO...

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? THE BOY HAS TALENT

THE END

SHADES

ADAM BEECHEN
writer

CHAD HARDIN
[illegible]ller

WAYNE FAUCHER
[illegible]ker

JOHN KALISZ
C[illegible]

PAT BROSSEAU
letter[illegible]

JESUS SAIZ

MY DAD MADE A *BUNCH* OF SILLY MOVIES YEARS AGO, SO WE SPENT TIME IN LOS ANGELES. "*OUR MAGIC CITY*," HE CALLED IT.

I *HATED* IT HERE... EVERYTHING FELT SO *FAKE*...EVEN THE *SUNSHINE* AND *PALM TREES* FELT LIKE SPECIAL EFFECTS...

WITH THE THINGS THEY COULD *ALREADY* DO WITH MOVIES, WITH THE *PROGRESS* THEY WERE MAKING...

...I WAS WORRIED *STAGE FOLK* LIKE US WOULD BE REDUCED TO *ARTIFACTS* AND *RELICS* TO BE SMIRKED OVER.

...WHILE AUDIENCES GOT *BIGGER* AND *BETTER* AMAZEMENT IN THE *MOVIE THEATERS*.

BUT DAD *LOVED* IT. "HOLLYWOOD IS ALL ABOUT *SPECTACLE*," HE SAID. "AND SO IS THE *FAMILY OF MAGIC*, NO MATTER THE STAGE."

SNUG NRUT OTNI STEPMURT!

RAC NRUT OTNI SEILFRETTUB!

TEKCIT HTOOB DNIHEB EM NRUT OTNI SWOLLIP!

HOLLYWOOD

HOORAY FOR IT, RIGHT?

BAF

BOOF

I *ONLY* COME TO L.A. FOR BUSINESS, AND *ONLY* IF I CAN'T GET OUT OF IT *GUILT-FREE*, SOMEHOW. LIKE *THIS* TRIP.

I'M IN TOWN FOR A SERIES OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS WHEN *THIS* HAPPENS

SKKREECH

AS SOON AS I *CAST* THE SPELL, I START TO *REGRET* IT.

...IMAGINING FIVE THOUSAND *PAPARAZZI FLASHBULBS*, TWENTY ARTICLES ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT I'VE GAINED *WEIGHT*, AND *YOUFACE VIDEOS* TWEAKED TO MAKE ME LOOK LIKE A *MONSTER*.

HOLLYWOOD. WHERE THE *CURTAIN* NEVER COMES *DOWN*.

"MAGIC CITY," MY *FISHNETS*.

BY THE TIME I FINISH WITH *POLICE STATEMENTS*, *AUTOGRAPH SEEKERS*, AND *CAMERAS*, I'M TWO HOURS LATE GETTING HERE

THE JUST-ABOUT-TO-OPEN *MAGIC MUSEUM*. NEXT TO THE *MAGIC PALACE NIGHTCLUB*. WE STAYED AT THE *ADJACENT HOTEL* WHEN MY DAD WASN'T FILMING

ORDINARILY, I'D HAVE REFERRED THIS JOB OUT TO MY COUSIN *ZACHARY*. BUT I JUST COULDN'T SAY *NO*. OUT OF RESPECT FOR MY *FATHER*

MY FATHER, *AND* THE FAMILY OF MAGIC

WOW, MS. STEFANACCI, THIS IS QUITE A *COLLECTION* YOU'VE PUT TOGETHER... HOW'D YOU *FIND* IT ALL?

PLEASE, CALL ME *ANTONIA*. AND THE *USUAL* WAYS...ESTATES, eBAY, STUFF LEFT BEHIND AFTER *APOCALYPTIC BATTLES*...

I'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN FASCINATED BY ARTIFACTS OF MAGIC.

AND I'VE ALWAYS FELT THEY SHOULD BE *PRESERVED*. THIS MUSEUM'S BEEN A *DREAM* OF MINE FOR YEARS.

AND *THIS* IS THE PART I'VE WAITED FOR THE MOST...WHEN IT ALL ROLLS IN BY THE *TRUCKLOAD.*

1815

DR. FATE

GOD...IT'S LIKE LOOKING AT MY FATHER'S *PHOTO ALBUM...!*

HUH...YOU'VE REALLY DUG IMPRESSIVELY ***DEEP***, ANTONIA.

MANITOU RAVEN...HAVEN'T HEARD ***HIS*** NAME MUCH LATELY.

HEY, THERE'S A WHOLE MUSEUM DEVOTED TO THE ***FLASH!***

WITH ALL THE MAGIC-USERS RUNNING AROUND, CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF FACILITY ***I*** CAN PUT TOGETHER?

IT'S A ***GREAT*** IDEA.

I WISH IT WERE ***ANYWHERE*** BUT ***HERE***

AND I'VE GOT ***LOTS*** MORE IDEAS FOR THE MUSEUM ITSELF... FILM CLIPS, INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS, LECTURES AND DEMONSTRATIONS...

I'D LOVE TO HAVE YOU ON OUR BOARD AS AN ***OFFICIAL CONSULTANT,*** NOT JUST TO HELP WITH OUR ***INITIAL INSTALLATION...***

SURE...I GUESS...IF IT'S OKAY THAT I DON'T GET OUT TO L.A. VERY OFTEN...

REALLY...? THEN WHAT I ACQUIRED TO ***BRIBE*** YOU WITH, I CAN JUST GIVE YOU AS A ***GIFT.***

REALLY, ANTONIA, NO GIFTS REQUIRED...JUST *SEEING* THIS STUFF IS REWARD ENOUGH.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO DO *SOMETHING*, TAKE ME TO LUNCH, OR--

OH, MY GOD, IS THIS *REALLY* A TURBAN FROM *SARGON THE SORCERER?!*

UH?

HE AND MY DAD WERE SO *COMPETITIVE!* SARGON WAS SO *JEALOUS* MY DAD WORKED IN FILMS...

BUT *BENEATH* IT ALL, THEY WERE *FRIENDS.* HE'D COME OVER AND DAD WOULD *CONJURE DINNER*...I EVEN CALLED HIM *"UNCLE SARGON."*

HE COULD BE SUCH A *POMPOUS JERK*...*HUGE, POWERFUL* PERSONALITY...HE *SHOULD'VE* BEEN THE ONE IN MOVIES...

LOTS OF GRANDIOSE *SPEECH-MAKING*...LONG SERMONS ABOUT A *NEW AGE OF MYSTICISM,* WITH "MAGIC ERADICATING ALL EVIL."

UNCLE SARGON *DIED* FIGHTING THAT EVIL...

HE DID HIS *BEST* IN HIS TIME, AND I GUESS WE'RE ALL *STILL* DOING WHAT HE TALKED ABOUT...ERADICATING EVIL, NOT THE AGE OF MYSTICISM PART.

ANYWAY.

ANTONIA...?

I *KNOW* IT'S HERE SOMEWHERE... *HA!*

THESE LOOK FAMILIAR?

OH.

MY DAD BOUGHT THESE BEFORE HE MADE HIS *FIRST* MOVIE. SAID THEY MADE HIM LOOK LIKE *ERROL FLYNN.*

NO...IT'S *WONDERFUL* TO SEE THEM, BUT...MY FATHER WOULD BE *HONORED* TO HAVE THEM DISPLAYED HERE AMONG HIS PEERS.

...THEY'LL *BE* HERE IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

I FOUND THEM IN A *JUNK SHOP* IN MIDWAY CITY. THEY'RE *YOURS,* IF YOU WANT THEM, ZATANNA.

YOU *SURE?* WELL...

THAT'S EVERYTHING. TOMORROW WE *REALLY* PUT YOU TO WORK.

I'LL CAST A *LIGHT WARD* OVER THE STORAGE AREA TO KEEP ANYONE FROM BREAKING *IN*...

...THEN *TOMORROW* WE CAN SET UP SECURITY FOR THE *INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITS* ONCE THE OBJECTS ARE *PLACED*.

ALTHOUGH, WITHOUT ANY *SERIOUS* RELICS HERE, NO *AMULETS OF NABU* OR *IBISTICKS*, I DOUBT YOU'LL HAVE MUCH *TROUBLE*.

NOW, ABOUT THAT *LUNCH*...

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MAGIC!

HEED THE CALL OF SARGON THE SORCERER!

NOW THAT WE ARE **UNITED**, I BID YOU **JOIN** ME IN MY **LIFELONG CRUSADE!**

TOGETHER WE SHALL **ERADICATE ALL EVIL!**

BE STILL, HAT. WE ARE **NOT** THE MEMORIES WE HAVE...WE ARE BUT **FAINT PSYCHIC TRACES** OF THE ONES WHO **WORE** US. **TELL** HIM, FATE.

BARON WINTER SPEAKS **TRUE**, SARGON. WE ARE THE **RESIDUE** OF MAGIC, NOT THE MAGICIANS.

WELL...**BAH!** BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE **STILL** HOLD POWER...MAYBE NOT ENOUGH **INDIVIDUALLY**, BUT **COMBINED**...

...AND THE **MEMORY** OF OUR MISSION CAN **BE** OUR MISSION!

SARGON, YOU MELODRAMATIC **FOOL**, YOU'RE GETTING **CARRIED AWAY**...

I DO NOT LISTEN TO THE LIKES OF **YOU**, IBIS! ONCE WE **SHARED** THE SAME GOAL AND WE CAN DO SO **AGAIN!**

I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO **GUIDE** US! WE SHALL BRING **MAGIC VENGEANCE** TO THIS LAND, AND LET EVIL **TREMBLE!**

RISE!

THIRTEEN... WHAT IS HAPPENING?

THE **TRACE** SARGON LEFT BEHIND IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO **COMMAND** US ALL, ZATARA...AND IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO **WAR**...

HATE TO ADMIT, IT IS *PRETTY* HERE AT NIGHT AND THEY DID A *GOOD* JOB REMODELING THE HOTEL.

MAYBE DAD SAW SOMETHING IN THIS TOWN THAT I *NEVER* DID.

"THEY SHOWED ME *THEIR* SPECIAL EFFECTS, AND THEN I SHOWED THEM *MINE*," HE'D SAY, HUGGING ME AFTER A DAY'S FILMING.

"YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE JAWS *DROP!*"

I CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE SUNGLASSES *AFFECTED* ME THIS MUCH. *SUPERNATURAL* IS MY *MIDDLE NAME*. I'VE COMMUNED WITH DAD'S SPIRIT *MANY* TIMES SINCE HE PASSED.

I THINK I'M MISSING HIS *PHYSICAL PRESENCE*.

A *SPIRIT* YOU CAN *TALK* TO, BUT A HUG AND SMILE FROM YOUR DAD *CAN'T* BE—

BOOM

THAT CAME FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE *MUSEUM*... SOUNDED *BIG*.

THAT *IS* THE MUSEUM!

DON'T UNDERSTAND... THE WARD I PLACED ON THE STORAGE AREA WASN'T THE *STRONGEST*...

EMUTSOC.

...BUT IT *SHOULD* HAVE BEEN *MORE* THAN ENOUGH TO STOP THE AVERAGE BURGLAR

TROPSNART EM OT EHT CIGAM MUESUM!

CAN'T *IMAGINE* IT'S A *SUPER-VILLAIN*... THOSE OBJECTS ARE PRETTY MUCH *WORTHLESS* MAGICALLY, EVEN AS *TOTEMS*...

NO! NOOOOOOO!!!

ZATANNA... I WAS AT THE MAGIC PALACE SEEING A *SHOW* AND HEARD THE *NOISE*...

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A SIMPLE *BURGLARY*, BUT THE WALL WAS BLASTED *OUT*...MY WARD WAS ONLY DESIGNED TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM GETTING *IN*...

THAT CAME FROM BACK DOWN THE HILL...

HAD TO BE AROUND-- OH, NO.

LOOKS LIKE A DRUG DEAL GONE *VERY* BAD... BUYER *AND* SELLER TURNED TO *POWDER*.

MY GOD...

IT'S LIKE SOMETHING THE *SPECTRE* WOULD DO ON A *GROUCHY DAY.*

EEEEEEE!

I MAY HAVE TO LEAVE YOU *BEHIND*, ANTONIA...

I'VE GOT TO GET *AHEAD* OF WHATEVER THIS IS, SOMEHOW...IF I KEEP PLAYING *CATCH-UP*, I'LL NEVER--

A *MUGGER* WHO GOT MORE THAN HE *BARGAINED* FOR.

IS THIS THE SPECTRE I'M DEALING WITH? IF SO, *WHY* DID HE START UP NEAR THE--

HAVE YOU COME TO *JOIN* OUR CRUSADE?

UNCLE SARGON...?

ZATANNA...?

SARGON'S TURBAN MUST HAVE *RETAINED* SOME OF HIS ESSENCE ALL THIS TIME...*MORE* THAN THE *OTHER* GARMENTS AND PERSONAL ITEMS...

SO THE TURBAN HAS ENOUGH THAT IT CAN *COMMAND* THE OTHERS, *MARSHAL* THE POWER THAT REMAINS...

PROBLEM IS...I THINK SO MANY YEARS OF BEING *DORMANT* HAS MADE UNCLE SARGON A LITTLE *CRAZY...-ER.*

AND THAT MAKES THIS THING...*POWERFUL*... AND *DANGEROUS?*

YES... AND *YES.*

SARGON...WE, THE *LIVING*, HAVE EVERYTHING UNDER *CONTROL*...

WHY DON'T YOU ENJOY YOUR *REST*, LET *US* TAKE CARE OF THINGS?

*TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO ACT **AGAINST** INJUSTICE AND NOT DO SO IS AS VILE AS COMMITTING INJUSTICE **ITSELF!***

*HAVE **ALL** THE LIVING BECOME SO SOFT?*

WHOOSHHH

YOU WHO WOULD STAND IN MY WAY... BEGONE!

I REMEMBER THIS CITY...FOUL IT WAS, AND RIDDLED WITH EVIL...

OH NO.

...AND I SEE IT IS STILL A GOMORRAH, ONE WORSE THAN WHEN LAST I SAW IT!

THERE IS ONLY ONE CURE FOR ITS ILLS! LAY IT WASTE AND BUILD AGAIN!

RUMMBBLLLLL

NO!

ECROFNIER LETOH!

EH?

YOU DARE TO INTERFERE?!

SARGON, YOU'RE ENDANGERING HUNDREDS OF INNOCENT LIVES!

OF COURSE I'M STANDING IN YOUR WAY!

LEPSID SDNOB NEEWTEB LACIGAM SEDAHS!

THERE ARE NO INNOCENTS HERE!

THERE IS ONLY JUSTICE...MY JUSTICE...

ZAMM

...AND I WILL SEE IT BE DONE!

RMMBBMMBBLL

WHOOF!

IT'S *USELESS* TRYING TO REASON WITH SARGON

HE'S *TOO FAR GONE*...

BUT...*WAIT!* HE'S NOT THE *ONLY* ONE *IN* THERE!

IF I CAN REACH A *PIECE* OF HIS COLLECTIVE... MAYBE HE CAN BE DISPELLED FROM *WITHIN!*

FATHER... DAD, CAN YOU HEAR ME?

WHO...?

NO! I SPEAK FOR *US ALL!*

I AM *SARGON* AND *MY* WILL IS THE *WAY!*

UNCLE SARGON, YOU'RE **POWERFUL**, BUT REMAINING BETWEEN A **DAUGHTER** AND A **FATHER** IS BEYOND EVEN **YOUR** CONTROL

NO!

DAD...?

ZATANNA? IS THAT YOU, MY GIRL...?

IT'S ME, DAD...I NEED YOUR HELP...

NO...

OF COURSE I'LL--IS THIS HOLLYWOOD?

SARGON, WHAT ARE YOU...?

NO, I COMMAND YOU, I--

SARGON, YOU ONLY COMMANDED ME BECAUSE SO LITTLE OF MY ESSENCE WAS IN THESE GLASSES...YOU'RE LUCKY MY HAT ISN'T HERE.

REGARDLESS, WITH MY DAUGHTER BY MY SIDE, YOU HAVE NOWHERE NEAR THE POWER TO COMMAND ME...

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!

SARGON, YOU OLD FOOL, THIS IS ALL STILL ABOUT ME GETTING INTO MOVIES AND NOT YOU, ISN'T IT?

WHAT? NO! I--

STOP! DO NOT SEEK TO CONTACT THE OTHER MAGES WITHIN ME!

TOO LATE.

ZATARA?

IS THAT YOU, JOHN?

ZATARA...?

TOOK YOUR TIME, ZATARA...

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO MAKE MY MOVE...

NO!

OF COURSE, WE ARE WITH YOU.

I FEEL NO NEED TO BE PART OF SARGON'S MADNESS.

I WAS ENJOYING MY REST...

YES.

LET THERE BE AN END.

THANK YOU, DARLING ZATANNA, FOR KEEPING OUR MAGIC CITY STANDING...

...AND FAREWELL... FOR NOW...

NOOOOoooo...

FLUMP!

THE BYSTANDERS... THEY THINK THIS WAS STAGED...? SOME KIND OF ENTERTAINMENT FOR THEM...?

I'M GUESSING IT'S SAFE NOW...?

BOY, IT'S ONE THING TO COLLECT ARTIFACTS FROM MAGIC USERS... BUT TO SEE MAGIC IN ACTION, UP CLOSE...?

SOMETHING ABOUT *HOLLYWOOD*... AMAZING

I GUESS, IN *ADDITION* TO WARDS TO PROTECT THE EXHIBITS FROM *OTHERS*, WE'LL NEED SOME TO PROTECT THEM FROM *EACH OTHER*. WHO'D HAVE *KNOWN*?

MAYBE THE MUSEUM SHOULD HAVE ONE *LESS* ARTIFACT TO WORRY ABOUT.

NOT BECAUSE I DON'T *LOVE* THEM, YOU UNDERSTAND...

I UNDERSTAND.

AND *THIS* TIME, I *ACCEPT*.

BUT I DON'T WANT... MY *FATHER* WOULDN'T WANT...TO LEAVE THE MUSEUM DEVOID OF ZATARA FAMILY HISTORY...

RETSOP RAEPPA.

ZATANNA...IT'S A *TREASURE*.

YES... IT IS...

THE AM

ZATA

AND PRESENTING FOR THE

NOV.11

MET

WHEN MY WORK'S DONE AT THE MUSEUM A FEW DAYS LATER, I TAKE ONE LAST WALK AROUND HOLLYWOOD BEFORE GOING TO THE *AIRPORT*

WHY DID I *EVER* HATE IT HERE? THE *CHEESY ARTIFICE*...THE *GLITZ* AND *GLAMOUR* FOR ITS *OWN* SAKE...THE *OVERKILL*...THE *ACTION*...THE *SPECTACLE*...THE *AUDIENCE* ON THE *EDGES* OF THEIR SEATS, FIGURATIVELY *OR* LITERALLY

THESE ARE THE THINGS SHOW PEOPLE LIVE FOR..."NO *MATTER* THE STAGE."

IT ALL APPEARS SO *DIFFERENT* TO ME NOW...*BRIGHTER*, *FRESHER*, FULL OF *POSSIBILITY* AND *EXCITEMENT*...OKAY, A CITY OF *MAGIC*...

...NOW THAT I SEE IT THROUGH MY *FATHER'S* EYES.

WALMART

THE END

PUPA PHOBIA

PAUL DINI
writer

CLIFF CHIANG
artist

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX
cover

I GUESS EVERYONE HAS THAT ONE STUPID, SCARY THING...

YOU KNOW NOTHING'S STUPID HERE, DEAR.

I KNOW. OKAY. SO I HAVE THIS FRIEND...

A *FRIEND*, ZEE?

A *FRIEND*, YES, IT'S NOT ME. THIS FRIEND IS SCARED TO DEATH OF NEEDLES.

WHEN HE WAS SEVEN, HE WENT INTO HYSTERICS AND PUNCHED OUT THE NURSE WHO WAS TRYING TO DRAW BLOOD BEFORE HIS TONSILLECTOMY.

THAT'S... EXCESSIVE.

YEAH. MY STAGE MANAGER IS TERRIFIED OF RATS, AND MY COUSIN, THOUGH HE'D NEVER ADMIT IT...

SPIDERS. HE SEES EVEN ONE AND FORGET IT. A TOTAL GONER.

BUT THIS ISN'T ABOUT THEM. IT'S ABOUT YOU, ZATANNA. AND YOUR SO-CALLED STUPID, SCARY THING...?

PUPPETS.

YEAH.

PUPPETS.

CREEPY, HORRIBLE, SOUL-SUCKING, TOSS-'EM-ALL-IN A-WOOD-CHIPPER PUPPETS.

IT'S NOT AS UNCOMMON AS YOU THINK, DEAR. AND WITH YOUR EXPERIENCES IN MAGIC, IT'S ONLY NATURAL YOU'D BE WARY OF HANDMADE FIGURES THAT EXUDED SOME CONTROL...

YES, BUT THIS ISN'T QUITE LIKE THAT.

VOODOO DOLLS, WAX EFFIGIES, I UNDERSTAND THEIR POWERS, JANA. I USE THEM MYSELF ON OCCASION.

IT'S THE OTHER ONES, THE SUPPOSEDLY HARMLESS ONES, WITH THE STRINGS AND DEAD EYES AND PAINTED FACES.

UGH. EVEN THE CUDDLY ONES...

YOU'VE SEEN THAT KIDS' TV SHOW, THAT ONE ABOUT SPELLING AND COUNTING?

I THINK SO.

THEY HAVE CELEBRITIES ON ALL THE TIME TO DO LITTLE SKITS WITH THEIR PUPPET CHARACTERS. I AGREED TO APPEAR IN AN EPISODE AND DO A BIT ON "THE MAGIC OF NUMBERS."

"I WASN'T THRILLED, BUT I FIGURED OKAY, FOR THE KIDS, I COULD GIRL UP AND DO IT."

I PSYCHED MYSELF UP, SMILED MY SUNNIEST SMILE, STRUTTED ONTO THE SET...

AND VOMITED INTO THE GREEN PUPPET'S TRASHCAN.

OUCH.

YEAH.

AND YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GET YOUR FEAR OF PUPPETS UNDER CONTROL?

SOMETIMES, WHEN THE STAKES WERE HIGH ENOUGH.

"ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I HELPED *BATMAN* TAKE DOWN THE SECOND *VENTRILOQUIST*.

"THE ONLY WAY I GOT THROUGH IT WAS BY CONCENTRATING ON THE POOR WOMAN WORKING SCARFACE, AND *NOT* ON THE DUMMY ITSELF.

"AND EVEN THEN, I WAS TRAGICALLY OFF MY GAME.

THEY FULFILLED THE TRAGIC DESTINY THEY LAID FOR THEMSELVES. YOU AREN'T TO BLAME.

I SUPPOSE NOT.

BUT THAT STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN THIS OVERWHELMING FEELING OF DREAD I'VE HAD FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS.

AND IT BEGAN WITH PUPPETS.

LAST WEEK I WAS IN HOLLYWOOD FOR THE OPENING OF THE NEW MAGIC MUSEUM.

MAGIC PALACE
< HOTEL MUSEUM >

"IT'S NEAR A PRIVATE CLUB AND HOTEL FOR MAGICIANS. I WAS THERE WITH MY STAGE MANAGER MIKEY TO RECEIVE THE AWARD FOR SHOW OF THE YEAR.

"THE EVENING STARTED PREDICTABLY ENOUGH..."

13

NO. YOU ARE NOT WEARING *THAT.*

WHAT? IT'S A SUIT.

THE INVITE SAID FORMAL. THIS IS AS FORMAL AS I GET.

THINK AGAIN, PAL.

SSERD REH PU!

OW!

I HATE WHEN YOU DO THAT!

IF YOU'D REMEMBER YOU'RE A GIRL ONCE IN A WHILE, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO.

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU'RE ACCEPTING OUR BIG, FANCY AWARD IN BUNNY SLIPPERS?

SSERD EM PU.

LIKE IT?

WHOA! A LITTLE BIT!

ARE THOSE REAL STARS?

MAYBE.

THOSE ARE REAL @%&*ING STARS!

"WITH GIRLY BONDING OUT OF THE WAY, MIKEY AND I PROCEEDED TO THE MUSEUM'S MAIN SALON, WHERE WE WERE WELCOMED IN GRAND STYLE

"THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR, ***ANTONIA STEFANACCI***, HAS GATHERED AN AMAZING COLLECTION OF MAGIC MEMORABILIA

"EVERY FACET OF STAGE LEGERDEMAIN IS REPRESENTED

MUSEUM OF MAGIC

"ESCAPE ARTISTRY, SPIRITUALISM...

"CARD TRICKS, MIND READING

"AND YES, OF COURSE...

PUPPETS

Watch Merry-O-Nette PLAYHOUSE!

EVERY AFTER-NOON

ON BOSTON CHANNEL 3

THE COLLECTION OF OSCAR HAMPEL'S MERRY-O-NETTES

"FIRST LESSON I EVER LEARNED IN ACTING CLASS: WHEN YOU'RE SCARED, GO RIGHT ON STAGE. I PLANNED TO WALK ON BY WITHOUT A THOUGHT [illegible]."

KLAK!

MOVE!

JEEZ, BOSS! NERVOUS MUCH?

"I HAD COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT BY THE TIME WE RECEIVED OUR AWARDS."

PERFORMING MAGIC IS ONE THING, BUT PULLING TOGETHER ALL THE CRAZY ELEMENTS THAT MAKE A GOOD SHOW, THAT TAKES A REAL MIRACLE-WORKER.

...MAKIN' ME BLUSH!

THIS HONOR WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE BEST STAGE MANAGER, BUILDER, DIRECTOR AND FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF WORKING WITH...

"THEN, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF MY SPEECH, IN FRONT OF ALL MY MAGIC PEERS AND [illegible] FACULTY

"IT WAS *THERE!*"

MAH... MIKE... MIKEY...

MIKEY DOWLING. THANKS, FOLKS. G'NIGHT.

"I HAD TO BE SURE I WASN'T GOING CRAZY.

"PROVE TO MYSELF THAT THE LITTLE KNOTHEAD WAS STILL IN ITS CASE.

"AND IT WAS."

ZEE? WHAT THE HELL?

"AND SOMEHOW THAT MADE IT EVEN WORSE."

YOU KNOW I DON'T SCARE EASILY, JANA. I'VE CONFRONTED EVERY HORROR THE MYSTICAL WORLD CAN THROW AT ME.

THAT'S TRUE.

SO WHY AM I CONTINUALLY RENDERED HELPLESS BY A CHILD'S PLAYTHING?

I SUSPECT IT'S NOT THE PUPPETS THEMSELVES, BUT A TRAUMA THEY REPRESENT. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN RECALL FROM YOUR PAST?

SOMETHING ABOUT THAT PARTICULAR PUPPET?

DON'T THINK SO... THOUGH I ACTUALLY *DO* REMEMBER THE NAME *MERRY-O-NETTES.*

"YEARS AGO, DAD AND I WERE AT A VAUDEVILLE REVIVAL SHOW IN BOSTON. MAGIC, JUGGLING, DOG ACTS

"THE SAME PUPPETS FROM THE MAGIC MUSEUM WERE ON THE BI

"FOR SOME CRAZY REASON, BACK THEN I THOUGHT THEY WERE CUTE

"I REMEMBER THERE WAS A ROBBERY THAT DAY

"THE THIEF REACHED TO GRAB ME AND

AND?

AND...A LITTLE WHILE LATER, I WOKE UP IN OUR HOTEL ROOM.

DADDY SAID I FAINTED AND THE POLICE CAUGHT THE ROBBER. HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE FOR ME TO WORRY ABOUT.

NOTHING AT ALL.

IT'S CLEAR YOU'RE MISSING WHATEVER HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WOKE UP. I THINK THAT'S THE KEY TO YOUR PHOBIA.

I'D LIKE YOU TO MEDITATE ON THAT FOR NEXT TIME. WE HAVE TO STOP NOW.

DO YOU FEEL BETTER?

A LITTLE. YES. THANKS, JANA.

SORRY I RAN OVER, BOBO.

NOT A PROBLEM, ANGEL.

I THOUGHT I HAD BEING DOING PRETTY WELL. THREE WEEKS WITHOUT A DRINK AND THEN, DAMN HALLOWEEN!

TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME, BOBO.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT MY SESSIONS WITH DR. BODIE. I'M SURE MOST EMOTIONALLY TROUBLED MYSTICS FEEL THE SAME WAY.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO CONSULT HER, IF THEY CAN REACH HER. JANA MAKES NO JUDGMENTS. HER "OFFICE" IS A NEUTRAL ZONE BETWEEN REALITIES.

STILL, HER TREATMENT ONLY GOES SO FAR. JANA HELPS POINT THE WAY, BUT IT'S UP TO HER PATIENTS TO TAKE IT FROM THERE.

FOR THIS NEXT STEP, I'LL HAVE TO RESORT TO MORE HUMAN MEANS...

Merry-O-Nette Playhouse

Merry-O-

WHOA! LOOK OUT, MARSHAL! THAT LION'S LOOSE!

-O-Nette Pl

an 87 videos Subscribe

RRROAR!

EVEN AFTER RELAXATION EXERCISES AND TWO CUPS OF CALMING TEA, I CAN BARELY WATCH THIS OLD SHOW

Share Embed

FROM WHAT LITTLE INFO I COULD GATHER, THE MERRY-O-NETTES AND THEIR CREATOR OSCAR HAMPEL HAD A SERIES THAT AIRED IN BOSTON FIFTY YEARS AGO.

IT HAD BEEN OFF THE AIR FOR DECADES BY THE TIME DAD AND I DID THAT VAUDEVILLE REVIVAL SHOW. IN AN INTERVIEW, HAMPEL STATED THAT THIS WAS HIS SWAN SONG AND HE WOULD BE HANGING UP HIS WOODEN FRIENDS FOREVER

IN LATER YEARS, HIS PUPPETS DRIFTED FROM COLLECTION TO COLLECTION, EVENTUALLY FINDING A PERMANENT HOME AT THE MAGIC MUSEUM

...elts. Th...

...llusionist Giovanni Zatara, a...

...e box-office attendant was never solve...

...st known photo of Oscar Hampel

BUT THERE'S NO RECORD OF HAMPEL AT ALL AFTER OUR LAST PERFORMANCE. HE SEEMS TO HAVE SIMPLY VANISHED.

LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO DIG DEEPER STILL. AND I REALLY DON'T LIKE WHOM I'LL HAVE TO ASK FOR HELP.

IN DREAMS...

HE'S GAINING ON YA, SIDNEY! HE'S GOT THE LOOKS, HE'S GOT THE MOVES, HE'S GOT THE CAR...

AND HE'S GOT YOU DEAD IN HIS SIGHTS! LITTLE DAVEY WHAT'S-HIS-NAME! TWO YEARS AGO JUST ANOTHER SNOT IN THE MAILROOM, AND NOW HE'S GUNNING FOR YOUR JOB!

RUN, SIDNEY! IF YOU CAN!

HELLO, FUSELI.

AHHH!

OOF!

DON'T DO THAT!

SORRY.

ZATANNA ZATARA. I THOUGHT WE HAD SEEN ENOUGH OF EACH OTHER WHEN WE BATTLED BROTHER NIGHT.

GOOD TIMES.

"INDEED. I STILL LOOK IN ON HIS DREAMS NOW AND THEN.

"IT MIGHT INTEREST YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE IN MOST OF THEM."

I'M SURE. LOOK, I'M HERE TONIGHT BECAUSE I NEED A FAVOR.

INTERESTING. NO.

AFTER OUR LAST ENCOUNTER, I FORBADE YOU TO ENTER MY DREAMS. NOW I'M OFFERING YOU A WAY BACK IN AND YOU BLOW ME OFF. OKAY, IF THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL...

WAIT!

I SHOWED YOU THIS DREAM ONCE BEFORE.

YES, AS A WAY OF TORMENTING ME WITH A DISTORTION OF IT. NOW I WANT TO SEE WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

A WORD OF FRIENDLY ADVICE FROM A NOT-SO-FRIENDLY ALLY--YOU MAY FIND MORE COMFORT WITH THE DISTORTION.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

MEANING I WASN'T ABLE TO GO FURTHER THAN THE SHADOWY MAN ATTACKING YOU. SOMETHING IN YOU BLOCKED ME. MAYBE THERE'S A REASON YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SEE EVERYTHING.

I HAVE TO KNOW. TOGETHER WE CAN OVERCOME THE BLOCK.

IF YOU MUST. CONCENTRATE. FOCUS ON THE DREAM-SHADOWS.

ANNATAZ REBMEMER...

THERE YOU GO, RUNNING BACK TO GET YOUR FATHER HIS BOUTONNIERE.

THE OPEN DOOR, THE MAN LYING DEAD ON THE FLOOR.

AND NOW THE FACE OF THE KILLER...

OSCAR HAMPEL. THE PUPPETEER.

I REMEMBER. THE KNIFE, HE WAS GOING TO KILL ME...

HAMPEL!

YOU *DARE* TOUCH MY DAUGHTER!?

STAY BACK!

YAWA!

UNNGH!

DADDY...

QUIET.

MURDERER. YOU'RE NOT FIT TO LIVE AS A HUMAN. LET STRINGS AND WOOD CLAIM YOU FOREVER!

EB A TEPPUP!

KLAKK

WHAT DID YOU...WHAT *IS* HE?!

ZATANNA, LOOK AT ME.

NO! DON'T HURT ME!

TEGROF... TEGROF...DNA PEELS...

MY FATHER...HE MIND-WIPED ME!

OH HO! THE NUT DON'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE, DO IT?

THEN THAT PUPPET, THE SAME ONE FROM THE MUSEUM...

I'D LOVE TO STAY AND PLAY CONNECT THE DOTS, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THIS DREAM IS OVER.

TOODLE-OO, KIDDO. SEE YOU IN YOUR NIGHTMARES.

WAIT, FUSELI, I...

I CAN'T MOVE. ARMS, LEGS...SO TIGHT...

BECAUSE YOU'RE ASLEEP SOMETHING IS HAPPENING...

IN THE WAKING WORLD...

NO!

HIYA, GIRLIE!

DIDYA MISS ME?

HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE

STRINGLESHANKS

PAUL DINI
writer

CLIFF CHIANG
artist

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

STEPHANE ROUX
cover

IT WAS THE WEIRDEST FEELING. KIND OF LIKE HOVERING IN AN ETERNAL DREAM THAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOU, BUT NOT TO YOU, IF THAT MAKES ANY SENSE.

"YOU CAN'T EVER THINK FOR TOO LONG--AT LEAST I COULDN'T. THE MORE I'D TRY TO FOCUS ON SOMETHING, THE MORE EVERYTHING WOULD JUMBLE UP AND FADE AWAY.

MUSEUM

MUS

"SO I LET MYSELF DRIFT. NEVER HOT, NEVER COLD, NOT DEAD...BUT NOT ALIVE, EITHER."

JUST NOTHING, REALLY. FOR YEARS AND YEARS.

"UNTIL *YOU* WALKED BY.

"ALL IT TOOK WAS ONE LITTLE GLANCE FROM YOU."

SUDDENLY IT WAS LIKE MY SOUL HAD BEEN SHOT BACK INTO MY BODY.

I COULD MOVE AND SPEAK AGAIN, A REAL-LIFE PINOCCHIO!

THOUGH I HAVE TO TELL YOU, STILL BEING A MARIONETTE REALLY SUCKED!

"THE ONLY UPSIDE WAS IT ALLOWED ME TO SLIP OUT OF THAT MAGIC MUSEUM UNSEEN...

"AND THEN INTO YOUR HOTEL ROOM. A LITTLE GUY LIKE ME, IT WAS EASY TO SQUEEZE MYSELF INTO ONE OF YOUR PROP CASES WHEN YOU WEREN'T LOOKING."

YOU WALKED ME RIGHT IN THE FRONT DOOR.

LITTLE BASTARD TIED ME WITH MARIONETTE STRING. IT CUTS, BUT IT'S CLUMSY AND LOOSE

C'MON, GIRL UP! MR. MIRACLE WOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF THIS IN EIGHT SECONDS, BATMAN, UNDER TWELVE!

HEY!

KAK!

TEPPUP POTS! EB...

WAIT!

DEYORTSED!

BZAAKK!

AHHH!

TRIED TO WARN YOU, MORON!

S-SGNIRTS EITNU!

WHEN YOUR OLD MAN LAID THAT WHAMMY ON ME...

I KNOW. IT MADE YOU HIS ALONE. STILL, I CAN AFFECT OTHER THINGS...

EFINK HSINAV!

DAMMIT!

KLUD!

OW!

RIAHC EMOCEB EGAC DNUORA TEPPUP!

IF MY MAGIC CAN'T AFFECT YOU, IT CAN STILL HOLD YOU!

NOW LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS!

EMUTSOC RAEPPA!

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE I WANT? YOU THINK I LIKE BEING A PUPPET?

YOU KILLED A MAN. I SAW YOU STANDING OVER HIS BODY.

YOU WOULD HAVE KILLED ME TOO IF MY FATHER HADN'T STOPPED YOU. BEING TURNED INTO A PUPPET SEEMS ALMOST A KINDNESS.

LOOK, I'M SORRY, BUT I NEVER MEANT TO HURT YOU.

IN THE CONFUSION OF THE MOMENT, I REACTED OUT OF FEAR. AND WHAT YOU THOUGHT YOU SAW, IT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STORY.

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL TELL ME YOUR SIDE.

OKAY...

MY NAME IS, ***WAS*** OSCAR HAMPEL.

"FIFTY YEARS AGO, MY MERRY-O-NETTES AND I WERE ON TOP OF THE WORLD. WE WERE EVERYWHERE...

"ON TV...

WBWW

Television

"IN BROADWAY REVUES...

"AND ON TOY SHELVES AROUND THE COUNTRY.

"IT WAS A GOLDEN MOMENT IN MY LIFE.

OFFICIAL Oscar Hampel MERRY-O-NETTE

MARSHAL

Fun!

"BUT *ONLY* A MOMENT.

"I COULDN'T BELIEVE HOW FAST IT ALL FELL APART. THE NIGHT CLUBS WENT FIRST.

"WHO WANTS TO WATCH A PUPPET SHOW AFTER YOU'VE HEARD SOME JERK COMIC SWEAR HIS HEAD OFF?

"THE BIG SATURDAY MORNING KIDS SHOW I COUNTED ON FELL THROUGH. BY THEN SUPERHEROES WERE IN AND PUPPETS WERE OUT.

KING COMET

"I TOUGHED IT OUT FOR A FEW MORE YEARS ON LOCAL TV IN BOSTON...

"BUT WITHOUT WIDE EXPOSURE, THE MERRY-O-NETTES, ALONG WITH OSCAR HAMPEL, WERE HEADED FOR OBLIVION."

MERRY-O-NETTES

50% OFF

OF COURSE, YOU CAN ADD TO THAT ALL THE USUAL DEMONS THAT GO HAND IN HAND WITH A FAILING CAREER--SHATTERED RELATIONSHIPS, ALCOHOLISM, DECLINING HEALTH...

I GET THE IDEA.

DO YOU? FROM WHAT I HEARD, YOUR POP NEVER PLAYED TO ANYTHING LESS THAN A SOLD-OUT HOUSE.

EVERY PERFORMER GOES THROUGH HARD TIMES, MY FATHER AND MYSELF INCLUDED.

WELL, HE WAS ON TOP OF THE WORLD WHEN I MET HIM. I LEAPT AT THE CHANCE TO DO THAT SHOW IN BOSTON.

"IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT I WAS GETTING BILLING BENEATH A DOG ACT, IT WAS A CHANCE TO CRAWL OUT OF THE PIT AGAIN.

"BUT I WASN'T IN THE CLEAR YET."

HAMPEL. LET'S TALK.

"TURNS OUT THE ONLY REASON I WAS ON THE BILL WAS THE MANAGER OF THE THEATRE WANTED A KICKBACK--HALF OF THE ONLY MONEY I HAD MADE ALL YEAR.

"WHEN I WOULDN'T GIVE IN, HE PULLED A KNIFE. I RAN TO GET HELP AND HE LUNGED FOR ME.

"WE SCUFFLED, I GRABBED THE KNIFE...

"I HAD NEVER HURT ANOTHER LIVING SOUL BEFORE, THAT'S THE GOD'S HONEST TRUTH.

"WHEN YOU WALKED IN AND STARTED SCREAMING, I PANICKED."

YOUR FATHER NEVER EVEN GAVE ME THE CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.

MY FATHER, LIKE MANY MAGICIANS, WAS AN EXPERT AT READING PEOPLE WITH A GLANCE.

PROTECTIVE OF ME AS HE WAS, HE WOULD NOT HAVE CAST SO STRONG A SPELL IN HASTE.

I SUSPECT HE SAW SOMETHING DARKER IN YOU.

REALLY? SOMETHING THAT DESERVED *THIS?* HE COULD HAVE, I DON'T KNOW, STUNNED ME, OR SENT ME TO THE POLICE.

DOING THIS TO A HUMAN BEING, THIS IS CRUELTY!

SMAK!

MY FATHER...HE MIND-WIPED ME!

OH, HO! THE NUT DON'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE, DO IT?

MY FATHER, FOR ALL HIS ABILITIES, WAS HUMAN. HE SOMETIMES MADE POOR CHOICES.

EGAC NRUTER OT RIAHC.

COME WITH ME.
WHAT, IN THERE?
STEP THROUGH THE MIRROR.
YOU'RE KIDDING.
LOOK, YOU'VE BEEN TURNED INTO A LIVING PUPPET. I THINK THAT WOULD MAKE YOU SOMEWHAT ACCEPTING OF THE POSSIBILITY OF ENTERING A MAGIC MIRROR.
OKAY, OKAY!
LIKE THIS?
KEEP GOING.
IT FEELS WEIRD...
MOVE!
KLUNK!
HEY! WATCH IT! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...
WHOA! WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

MY FAMILY'S MANSION, ***SHADOWCREST.*** IF THERE IS A WAY TO REVERSE MY FATHER'S SPELL, WE WILL FIND IT ***HERE.***

STRUNG ALONG

PAUL DINI

CLIFF CHIANG

JOHN KALISZ

PAT BROSSEAU

STEPHANE ROUX 'th KARINE BOCCANFUSO

COVE

STAY CLOSE, BE QUIET AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING.

IF SOMEONE TOLD ME I'D BE GIVING A *PUPPET* A GUIDED TOUR OF MY ANCESTRAL HOME, I'D HAVE CALLED THEM CRAZY.

WHATEVER YOU SAY, GIRLIE.

YET, HERE I AM, TRYING TO UNDO A SPELL THAT MY FATHER PLACED ON A PERSON WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE DESERVED HIS DIRE PUNISHMENT.

SO YOUR PA GOT ALL THIS BY DOING CARD TRICKS. NICE.

ONE DOESN'T COME BY A MANSION LIKE SHADOWCREST JUST BY DOING "TRICKS."

WHAT, HE MADE THE DOWN PAYMENT ON THE PLACE BY ZAPPING UP A COUPLE HUNDRED GRAND?

THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A DIRECT VIOLATION OF THE LAWS OF KARMA.

MAGIC USED IN SELFISH OR CARELESS WAYS HAS A NASTY HABIT OF STRIKING BACK AT THE USER.

MAGIC DIDN'T DO ME ANY FAVORS, EITHER.

WE SHALL SEE, OSCAR HAMPEL.

NEPO.

THIS IS THE INNER SANCTUM OF THE GREAT JOHN ZATARA.

ENTER IN PEACE, LEAVE THE SAME WAY.

OH, MAMA!

IT'S THE MAGICAL MOTHER LODE!

A CRUDE WAY TO DESCRIBE THE WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF SORCEROUS ARCANA.

BUT YES, WITHIN THESE WALLS CAN BE FOUND THE MEANS TO REMOVE ALL BUT THE MOST POWERFUL ENCHANTMENTS.

THAT... *THING* CAN TALK?!

THE IRONY OF THAT STATEMENT IS LOST ON OUR WOODEN FRIEND, CHAUNCEY.

IT *IS* AMUSING, ABELARD.

THAT'S ENOUGH, YOU TWO.

COME OVER HERE, MISTER... IT SEEMS ODD TO CALL YOU BY YOUR HUMAN NAME.

YOUR FATHER CAST ME IN THE LIKENESS OF STRINGLESHANKS, MY BEST-KNOWN MARIONETTE. I GUESS THAT NAME WILL DO.

CHARMING. VERY WELL, STRINGLESHANKS. STAY WHERE I CAN SEE YOU.

DON'T FRET. I WON'T TAKE ANYTHING.

THAT'S NOT A CONCERN. HOWEVER, MANY OF THESE OBJECTS ARE SENSITIVE TO TOUCH AND THOUGHT.

A WISH OR CURSE, FOR INSTANCE, MADE CARELESSLY AND WHILE IN CONTACT WITH ONE OF THESE ITEMS COULD CAST YOU IN AN EVEN WORSE STATE.

I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.

SO WITH ALL THIS POWER, WHY DOES EVERYONE IN YOUR FAMILY PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS COMMON STAGE MAGICIANS? YOU COULD RUN THE WORLD.

IT'S HARD ENOUGH TRYING TO ***PROTECT*** THE WORLD. I'D BE OUT OF MY MIND TO TRY TO RUN IT.

MY ANCESTRAL RACE, THE ***HOMO MAGI***, HAS ALWAYS BEEN AWARE OF THE CORRUPTIVE POWERS OF MAGIC. WE VIEW MAGIC AS A TOOL, NOT AS A WEAPON TO BEND OTHERS TO OUR WILL.

"I'VE SEEN HOW THE LURE OF POWER DESTROYS AMBITIOUS SOULS. IT'S NOT A PRETTY SIGHT."

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON
SAN QUENTIN

STOP

THE WARDEN CALLED AT 5:00 AM, DESPERATE TO TALK TO SOMEONE IN PARANORMAL CRIMES. LUCKY ME, I HAD DRAWN THE FREAK BEAT LAST NIGHT.

COLTON. S.F.P.D.

THANK GOD. WE WERE PRAYING THEY'D SEND AN EXPERT.

POLICE

MURRAY. TAKE THE DETECTIVE BACK TO THE HOSPITAL.

NOT ME. NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS.

THAT'S AN ORDER!

NEVER MIND. JUST BUZZ ME IN.

NOT EVEN A PROTEST. IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE ZATANNA ZATARA AND I DEPOSITED ELDON PECK, A.K.A. ***BROTHER NIGHT***, HERE IN SAN QUENTIN.

SINCE THEN, THE FORMER CULT LEADER TURNED SORCERER HAS LAIN COMATOSE IN THE PRISON INFIRMARY.

OR SO I BELIEVED.

EVEN ENTRANCED, NIGHT'S PRESENCE EXERTS A POWERFUL GRIP ON THE OTHER PRISONERS.

NIGHT...

NIGHT...

NIGHT... BROTHER NIGHT...

BROTHER NIGHT...

BROTHER NIGHT...

THEY PRAY TO HIM LIKE A GOD.

ONE POOR ZEALOT HAD IT WORSE THAN MOST...

AFTER CUTTING HIS THROAT, HE USED HIS OWN BLOOD TO SCRAWL HIS LAST WORDS OF DEVOTION.

NIGHT IS GOD

WARDEN.

DETECTIVE COLTON, I REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT...

MAYBE IT'S BETTER YOU DON'T TRY. HE'S THROUGH HERE?

YES, BUT...

I'LL CALL IF I NEED YOU.

LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THE DOCTORS TRIED TO SEDATE OLD ELDON. I DON'T THINK HE LIKED THAT.

AND THEN A GUARD RAN IN TO RESCUE THE DOC. FUNNY THE WAY HE SUDDENLY DECIDED TO SHOOT HIMSELF.

KNOCK, KNOCK, ELDON. YOU DECENT?

I CAN'T BE SURE IF NIGHT IS DOING THIS HIMSELF, OR IF HE'S THE FOCAL POINT OF SOME GREATER POWER. EITHER WAY...

THIS IS BAD.

DETECTIVE...

COLTON.

AH!

I'M BACK.

THE SOUL CRYSTAL. THIS IS INSTRUMENTAL.

WILL THAT TURN ME BACK TO HUMAN?

HARDLY. TRY TO UNDERSTAND, TRANSFORMATION SPELLS COME IN DIFFERENT POTENCIES.

SOME ARE INTENDED TO WEAR OFF QUICKLY, WHILE OTHERS ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO BIND A VICTIM THROUGH ETERNITY.

A SKILLED MAGICIAN CAN USUALLY BREAK THE LESSER SPELLS. A CURSE DEVISED BY A POWERFUL WIZARD IS A LOT MORE TROUBLE.

TO TRY TO REMOVE IT WITHOUT TAKING THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS WOULD BE LIKE DEACTIVATING A BOMB WITH A SLEDGEHAMMER.

ONE THING YOU MAY HAVE IN YOUR FAVOR IS ***KARMA.*** A BLAMELESS SOUL UNFAIRLY CURSED STANDS A BETTER CHANCE OF RELEASE THAN A WICKED ONE.

I TOLD YOU THE WAY IT HAPPENED, HOW I WAS BLACKMAILED AND NEARLY KILLED.

THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE CRYSTAL'S REVELATIONS.

TOUCH IT!

NO!

LATSYRC HCUOT TEPPUP!

HEY!

AS A HUMAN, YOUR NAME WAS OSCAR HAMPEL. IS THAT TRUE?

YES.

AND TRUE TO YOUR WORD, YOU LED AN INNOCENT LIFE UNTIL YOU WERE, AS YOU SAY, UNFAIRLY CURSED BY MY FATHER.

INNOCENT? ME? THAT'S A HOT ONE. I'M AS BAD AS THEY COME.

CRIMINAL TYPE. I KNEW IT THE MOMENT I SET EYES ON HIM.

QUIET! I CAN'T HEAR.

IF ANYONE EVER DESERVED TO WIND UP CURSED FOR ETERNITY, IT WAS OSCAR HAMPEL.

HOW INTERESTING. TELL ME MORE.

OH JEEZ, WHERE TO BEGIN? LET'S SKIP THE EARLY YEARS OF PETTY THEFT AND TIME SPENT IN REFORM SCHOOL.

1955. I'M LOOKING FOR WORK IN NEW YORK AND GET A JOB AS AN ASSISTANT TO THE ROSSIS, A MOM AND POP TEAM OF PUPPETEERS JUST OFF THE BOAT FROM ITALY.

I HAD NEVER PICKED UP A PUPPET BEFORE, BUT I LEARNED QUICK.

I ALSO FIGURED OUT THERE WAS NO MONEY TO BE MADE PERFORMING IN ONE DUMPY THEATRE LIKE THEY DID IN THE OLD COUNTRY.

THE BIG BUCKS WERE IN TELEVISION, BUT OLD MAN ROSSI WANTED TO KEEP HIS ART "PURE."

SOON AFTER, THERE WAS A FIRE AT THE THEATRE WHILE THE OLD FOLKS SNOOZED UPSTAIRS.

33

LUCKILY, I WAS NEARBY TO RESCUE THE PUPPETS.

BUT NOT YOUR BENEFACTORS.

SO I POPPED SOME SLEEPING PILLS INTO THEIR VINO THAT NIGHT BEFORE I TORCHED THE PLACE. AT LEAST IT WAS PAINLESS.

YOU'RE A SAINT. THEN WHAT?

I CHANGED THE NAME OF THE ACT TO OSCAR HAMPEL'S MERRY-O-NETTES AND SPENT THE NEXT FEW YEARS AT THE TOP.

MOST OF THE REST, YOU ALREADY KNOW. MARIONETTES FELL BY THE WAYSIDE IN SHOW BIZ AND SO DID I. THAT PART WAS ALL TRUE.

AND THE MAN YOU KILLED IN BOSTON, HE NEVER BLACKMAILED YOU, DID HE?

NOPE. HE WALKED IN AS I WAS PRYING OPEN THE CASH BOX. I WAS DESPERATE FOR MONEY AND PLANNED TO TAKE EVERY CENT.

I CUT HIS THROAT BEFORE HE COULD CALL FOR HELP, AND I WAS GOING TO DO THE SAME TO YOU.

MY FATHER WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU ALL ALONG!

ONE GLANCE INTO YOUR EYES MUST HAVE REVEALED EVERY ATROCITY YOU'VE EVER COMMITTED!

NOT ONLY WILL I NOT HELP YOU, I'M SORRY ZATARA'S SPELL IS SO STRONG THAT I CAN'T TURN YOU INTO SOMETHING WORSE!

NO! YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS!

THE CRYSTAL! NO ONE'S EVER BROKEN ITS CONNECTION!

NO ONE EVER WANTED THEIR LIFE BACK LIKE I DO, BITCH!

TEPPUP POTS...

THUD!

UNGHH!

UNHAND THOSE! YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THEIR POWER!

SHUT UP!

IZZAK!

AWK!

IT WORKED! THESE THINGS DID WHAT I SAID!

N-NO! STOP! THE MAGIC IS CORRUPTED!

MAKE ME HUMAN AGAIN!

AHH!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

I WARNED YOU ABOUT MESSING WITH ANOTHER WIZARD'S SPELLS! THE CURSE IS BREAKING, BUT IT'S WARPING REALITY AROUND IT!

I'LL TRY TO CONTAIN IT!

NO! I WON'T GO BACK! I WANT TO BE HUMAN! *HUMAN!!*

SO TIRED. CAN'T. FOCUS.

YOU'RE ON IN TEN SECONDS!

I'M DOING A SHOW TONIGHT?

NO ONE TELLS ME THESE THINGS. I NEED TO FIRE...

...MY CREW? WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

WHAT'S MY SHOW ORDER? AM I EVEN DRESSED? SO OUT OF IT...

WHERE ARE MY PROPS? WHO'S GOT MY WAND?

I KNOW THAT GUY... DAVE SOMETHING... JIMMY SOMETHING...

...A SHOW BUSINESS LEGEND... SO THRILLED TO PRESENT...

♪ WITH A WINSOME LITTLE WINK, AND A MAGIC LITTLE BLINK... ♪

OH MY GOD, THAT SONG AGAIN! THAT AWFUL, IDIOTIC ***SONG!***

I'LL MAKE ALL YOUR WISHES COME TRUE.

I'M JUST A SILLY THING, MADE OF WOOD AND STRING, BUT I'LL MAKE ALL YOUR WISHES COME TRUE...

I REMEMBER AGAIN... THE SPELL BACKFIRED...

I'M TRAPPED... NIGHT AFTER NIGHT...

NO WAY OUT

THANK YOU. BLOW A KISS TO YOUR FANS, MISS ZEE-ZEE.

M-WAH! I LOVE YOU!

AND ONE FOR OUR HOST!

TEE-HEE! M-WAH!

THANK YOU, MISS ZEE-ZEE.

OSCAR HAMPEL, YOU ARE THE COMEBACK STORY OF THE DECADE. LIKE EVERY KID IN AMERICA, I GREW UP WATCHING YOUR MERRY-O-NETTES. GREAT STUFF.

THANK YOU, JAMIE.

TWENTY YEARS AGO, YOU PULLED A VANISHING ACT. THEN JUST LAST MONTH, YOU RESURFACED WITH A FULL SLATE OF TV APPEARANCES, LIVE SHOWS, THE WHOLE DEAL. WHAT'S THE STORY?

IT'S NO SECRET, JAMIE. AFTER WORKING HARD AT MY CRAFT ALL THROUGH MY YOUTH, I DECIDED TO TAKE SOME TIME OFF.

HE FADED INTO THE WOODWORK, SO TO SPEAK.

OOH! I THINK YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME AROUND PUPPETS, OSCAR!

NOT AT ALL, JAMIE.

IT WAS MY LUCKY DAY WHEN I CONJURED UP MISS ZEE-ZEE. I WAS SO TAKEN WITH HER THAT I JUST HAD TO SHARE HER WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

ISN'T HE THE SWEETEST THING?

BASTARD

M-WAH!

SHE'S MY SPECIAL LITTLE LADY. WE'RE GOING TO BE TOGETHER FOREVER AND EVER.

FOREVER AND EVER.

ZATANNA

UNSTRUNG

PAUL DINI
writer

JAMAL IGLE
penciller

JON SIBAL
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

ADAM HUGHES
cover

ALL IT TAKES IS A SCRAP OF LEATHER...

OR A PIECE OF WOOD...

A BIT OF FELT, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER.

THERE'S NO *MAGIC* TO IT...

WITH A LITTLE IMAGINATION, ANYTHING CAN BE A PUPPET.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, MISS ZEE-ZEE?

TEE-HEE! THAT'S RIGHT, OSCAR!

EVIL BASTARD...

IT WAS WONDERFUL TO HAVE YOU PERFORM FOR THE CHILDREN, MR. HAMPEL.

MY PLEASURE, MS. STEFANACCI. I'M HAPPY TO INTRODUCE KIDS TO MY HUMBLE ART FORM, WHETHER THROUGH LIVE PERFORMANCES...

...OR THE NEW PUPPET EXHIBIT I'M DONATING TO YOUR MAGIC MUSEUM.

THE MUSEUM BOARD IS OVERWHELMED AT YOUR GENEROSITY, OSCAR. WE'VE WANTED TO EXPAND OUR PUPPET DISPLAY FOR SOME TIME.

IT WAS A MIRACLE THE WAY YOU SUDDENLY APPEARED AND BROUGHT IT TO FRUITION.

I'M SURE MY MISS ZEE-ZEE WILL FEEL RIGHT AT HOME HERE.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO ADD HER TO THE DISPLAY?

I ONCE SAID WE'D BE TOGETHER FOREVER, BUT I THINK SHE'LL BE BETTER OFF SAFELY BEHIND LOCK AND KEY.

ZEE-ZEE WAS THE FIRST PUPPET I CREATED WHEN I CAME OUT OF RETIREMENT. SHE WAS WHAT I NEEDED TO GET STARTED AGAIN, AND NOW I'M READY TO MOVE ON.

NO

SOMEHOW I KNOW SHE'LL LOVE SPENDING ETERNITY SURROUNDED BY HER LITTLE WOODEN FRIENDS.

WE'RE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PRESENTATION THIS EVENING.

IT'S A BIG NIGHT. YOU DON'T MIND IF I REST UP A BIT?

OF COURSE NOT. THE DRESSING ROOM IS YOURS FOR AS LONG AS YOU NEED IT.

TONIGHT'S WHEN WE PART COMPANY, GIRLIE.

OH, IT WAS FUN FOR A COUPLE MONTHS, MAKING YOU JUMP TO MY TUNE...

BUT I'VE GOT A NEW LEASE ON LIFE THANKS TO THE MAGIC DOOHICKEYS I SWIPED FROM YOUR OLD MAN'S STUDY.

I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW THEY MANAGED TO TURN ME BACK TO HUMAN. MAYBE SOME KIND OF WISH FULFILLMENT ZAPPED YOUR PA'S SPELL OFF ME AND ONTO YOU.

ALL I KNOW IS I HAVE A BAG FILLED WITH MAGIC, AND I'VE GOT A LIFETIME LEFT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO USE IT.

HAVE TO STOP HIM...THOUGHTS... SO HARD TO FOCUS

SO EASY...TO DRIFT...MUST FOCUS...

FOCUS... FO-CUS... FO

IDIOT...HAS TO BE

BACKWARD... SU...SU... SUCOF...

YES! I DID IT! I CAN THINK CLEARLY AGAIN!

ANNATAZ EMOCEB NAMUH NIAGA! LEPMAH NRUT OTNI A DAOT!

NOTHING'S HAPPENING. I BROUGHT MY MIND BACK BUT THAT'S IT.

I'LL NEED TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THOSE MAGICAL ITEMS BEFORE I CAN DO ANYTHING ELSE

KNOCK KNOCK

PUT YOUR PANTS ON, THERE'S A LADY PRESENT! TEE-HEE!

I KNOW. THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

I DON'T WANT ANY VISITORS NOW, IF YOU PLEASE. I HAVE A TV APPEARANCE IN A LITTLE WHILE...

HI! I'M TERRI. THE STUDIO SENT ME OVER TO MAKE YOU LOOK HANDSOME.

THUG LIFE

OOPS! BUT I SEE I'M NOT NEEDED.

AREN'T YOU SWEET. PLEASE, COME IN.

YOU'RE THE FAMOUS MR. HAMPEL, RIGHT?

I THINK PUPPETS ARE *AMAZ*-ING! CAN I SEE ONE?

CERTAINLY. I HAPPEN TO HAVE ONE RIGHT HERE...

THOUGH TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, IT'S A *MARIONETTE.*

OOOH! MAY I HOLD HER?

NO.

SHE'S SOOO PRETTY!

UNHAND ME, MORON! WHERE DO THEY GET THESE IDIOTIC...

JUST LIKE A REAL, LIVE GIRL.

M-MIKEY?

OH MY GOD! MIKEY!

YOU FOUND ME!

AND... YOU LOOK LIKE TRASH!

HERE, I DON'T WANNA BREAK HER.

DON'T WORRY. YOU SEEM TO HAVE A DELICATE...TOUCH. MAYBE YOU'D LIKE PRIVATE INSTRUCTIONS LATER.

WONDERFUL! BUT FIRST, LET'S GET YOU ALL NEAT 'N' PRETTY!

SOME ASTRINGENT, I THINK, TO WAKE UP THAT SKIN.

CHLORAFEAR

WAIT! THAT'S NOT...

JUST RELAX AND BREATHE DEEP.

SWEET DREAMS, CUPCAKE!

BOSS! ARE YOU OKAY?

CAN YOU SAY SOMETHING? MAYBE JUST NOD?

NO, BUT...MIKEY'S UNDER A SPELL HERSELF. IF I FOCUS ON THE MAGIC BINDING HER, MAYBE IT'S ENOUGH...

TNIOP!

THAT BLACK CASE... THERE'S SOMETHING IN IT YOU WANT?

WHOA. I'VE SEEN SOME OF THESE THINGS AT YOUR POP'S PLACE. LOOKS LIKE OSCAR WAS WORKING UP SOME SERIOUSLY BAD MOJO.

YOU DID NOTICE I'M NOW A PUPPET, RIGHT? JUST PUT ONE OF THOSE THINGS IN MY HAND...

YOU KNOW THE TRICKY STUFF BETTER THAN I DO, SO I'M JUST GONNA LUMP THEM ALL TOGETHER AND HOPE FOR THE BEST.

OKAY, FINE.

I HSIW FLESYM MANUH!

YES. THE SPELL NEEDS SOME FINE TUNING, BUT AT LEAST I CAN MOVE AND SPEAK AGAIN.

YEAH, BUT... YOU'RE STILL A PUPPET.

IT WORKED... SORT OF.

YOU'RE STILL A PUPPET.

AS WE BOTH KNOW, IT'S THE PERSON INSIDE THAT COUNTS. NICE OUTFIT, BY THE WAY. YOU TAKE UP POLE DANCING WHILE I WAS GONE?

ONLY FOR YOU WOULD I WEDGE MYSELF INTO PINK DAISY DUKES. I'M JUST HAPPY I WAS ABLE TO SLEAZE MY WAY IN TO SEE HAMPEL.

YOU'RE A LIFESAVER. HOW DID YOU FIND ME?

IT WASN'T EASY. FIRST I HAD TO REALIZE YOU WERE MISSING.

"OVER THE YEARS, I'VE GOTTEN USED TO YOU VANISHING FOR DAYS AT A TIME.

"USUALLY HERO STUFF--YOU GO, YOU SAVE THE WORLD, YOU'RE BACK IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS.

ST REET PIZZA

"BUT WHEN YOU HAD BEEN GONE A MONTH WITHOUT A PHONE CALL, I DECIDED TO CHECK IN."

HEY, BOSS? YOU HOME?

"AT FIRST, WHEN I SAW ALL THE TWINE ON THE BED, I THOUGHT YOU HAD LUCKED OUT AND WERE HAVING A MONTH'S WORTH OF KINKY SEX WITH A NEW GUY.

'BOUT TIME!

"BUT WHEN I STOPPED IN AGAIN LATER THAT WEEK TO GET THE DISH, I SAW EVERYTHING WAS IN THE EXACT SAME POSITION.

"THAT WAS ALSO WHEN I NOTICED THE TWINE WAS ACTUALLY MARIONETTE STRING. WEIRD."

I ASSUME BY THEN YOU WERE MAKING CALLS ABOUT ME.

RIGHT, FIRST TO THE OTHER CAST MEMBERS, THEN TO YOUR COUSIN, ***ZACH.*** NADA.

I EVEN WENT TO SEE THAT COP YOU LIKE, ***DALE COLTON.***

WE WORKED TOGETHER ONCE. WHO SAID I LIKED HIM?

YOU ALWAYS GO FOR THE TROUBLED LONERS. I JUST ASSUMED...

WELL, YOU ASSUMED WRONG.

DID HE SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ME?

ONLY THAT HE'D PUT OUT AN *ATL** ON YOU.

OH. THAT'S... OFFICIAL OF HIM.

ALSO, HE TOLD ME THAT PERVERT BROTHER NIGHT SNAPPED OUT OF THAT WHAMMY YOU PUT ON HIM.

*ATTEMPT TO LOCATE.

"THE WORD IN THE FRISCO UNDERWORLD IS HE'S RUNNING SAN QUENTIN FROM THE INSIDE."

YIKES. ONE DISASTER AT A TIME, PLEASE.

OKAY, SO THAT NIGHT I'M FLIPPING AROUND LATE NIGHT TV AND WHO DO I SEE?

MISS ZEE-ZEE?! WHAT THE HELL--???

"THAT WAS TOO CLOSE TO BE A COINCIDENCE!

"ESPECIALLY AS I REMEMBERED HOW CREEPED-OUT YOU WERE BY OSCAR'S PUPPETS. A GLANCE THROUGH YOUR COMPUTER HISTORY TOLD ME YOU WERE INVESTIGATING HIM, TOO.

WAYNE TECH

"SO I STARTED STALKING HAMPEL, KEEPING TABS ON HIS 'COMEBACK.'"

WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THE PUPPET DISPLAY HE WAS PUTTING IN HERE, I KNEW IT WAS TIME TO MAKE MY MOVE.

HMM?

I GUESS THAT'S THE LAST OF...

NO!

THOSE ARE *MINE!*

DECEITFUL SLUTS! I'LL MAKE YOU BEG FOR DEATH!

LET'S MAKE A DEAL, CREEP. JUST LET ME PACK MY FRIEND UP AND WE'LL GET OUT OF HERE.

I HAVE A BETTER IDEA. WHY NOT JOIN HER?

OH, YOU DON'T WANT TO BE DOING THAT!

GO AHEAD! PLAY THE DUMMY FOR ME AGAIN! FOREVER!

AUUGHH!

SHRA

I'M STRINGLESHANKS AGAIN! HOW...?

MIKEY TRIED TO WARN YOU.

AND ALL YOUR MISCHIEF WAS UNDONE.

SHE'S UNDER AN ENCHANTMENT, TOO. A "BLESSING" OF SORTS, NO POINT IN GOING INTO ALL THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES NOW.

ALL THAT'S IMPORTANT IS THE SPELL THAT PROTECTS HER SENT YOUR OWN CURSE BACK ONTO YOU...

STAY AWAY FROM ME!

WHERE DOES HE THINK HE'S GOING TO GO?

I DON'T KNOW...

BUT AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, I THINK CONTAINING HIM IS WISER THAN TRYING TO DESTROY HIM.

KLIM NAC...

...NEPO DNA HCTAC EHT TEPPUP!

NO!

HOUDINI COULD ESCAPE FROM A LOCKED MILK CAN IN UNDER TWO MINUTES. I'M THINKING IT'LL TAKE YOU SOMEWHAT LONGER.

ESPECIALLY NOW!

DIL EB DELAES!

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I COULD USE A BEER.

I'LL BUY THE FIRST THREE ROUNDS.

I BROUGHT YOU A PRESENT.

USUALLY I NEVER ACCEPT GIFTS...

BUT AS I RECOGNIZE THIS AS A SIGN OF YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH, I'LL TAKE IT, GLADLY.

I UNDERSTAND MY FEAR NOW.

MY FATHER'S MANIPULATION OF MY MIND, EVEN THOUGH HE BELIEVED HE DID IT FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS, LEFT ME WITH A RESIDUAL FEELING OF BEING CONTROLLED AGAINST MY WILL.

LIKE A PUPPET?

I GUESS I HAD TO EMBRACE THAT IDENTITY BEFORE I UNDERSTOOD HOW DEEPLY IT AFFECTED ME.

AND NOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND...

I NO LONGER FEAR. THANK YOU, DR. BODIE.

ZATANNA.

BROTHER NIGHT. I'M SURPRISED TO SEE YOU HERE.

INDEED? YOU KNOW DR. BODIE'S SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL MAGICIANS, DEBATABLY GOOD OR BAD.

THOUGH YOU'D THINK A COUNSELOR OF HER STATURE WOULD HAVE A BETTER SELECTION OF MAGAZINES.

I WON'T ASK HOW YOU REGAINED CONTROL OF YOUR MIND...

GOOD.

I JUST HOPE YOUR PRESENCE HERE MEANS YOU'RE DEVOTING SOME EFFORT INTO PERSONAL INTROSPECTION--REMORSE, FORGIVENESS...

PLEASE, ZATANNA. THIS IS A REALM OF PEACE AND HEALING. OUR PETTY SQUABBLES ON THE EARTHLY PLANE HAVE NO PLACE HERE.

NO, THEY DON'T.

VERY WELL, THEN.

HELLO, ELDON. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

FOCUSED, RESTED AND READY, DR. BODIE.

NEVER BETTER.

THE END

ADAM BEECHEN
writer

JAMAL IGLE
penciller

ROBIN RIGGS
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

...REMEMBER, YOU'RE GOING TO BE ***SORE*** FOR A FEW DAYS, SO STAY AWAY FROM THE ***HARD, CRUNCHY*** FOODS...AND NO CHEWING ***ICE*** OR ***POPCORN!*** WE DON'T WANT ANYTHING ***BREAKING*** OR GETTING ***STUCK*** IN THE ***BANDS!***

WE'LL SEE YOU ***EVERY MONTH*** FOR THE NEXT ***TWO YEARS*** TO TIGHTEN THOSE ARCHWIRES!

DZZ IT HFF TBEE ***EVRRR***MNTH?

EXCUSE ME, DEAR?

UH***SDD***... DOOIHVVTGET THMM TIGHTNND ***EVERRR***MNTH?

OH, YOU ***POOR THING***...IT'LL PROBABLY TAKE A ***WHILE*** FOR YOU GET USED TO ***TALKING*** WITH THE BRACES.

GO ***HOME,*** EAT SOME ***APPLESAUCE,*** TAKE A NICE ***NAP,*** AND YOU'LL BE ***MUCH*** LESS SORE WHEN YOU WAKE UP.

HURTS TO EVEN *OPEN* MY MOUTH, AND WHEN I DO, I'M AN *UNINTELLIGIBLE HUMAN SPRINKLER.*

HOW'M I SUPPOSED TO *PRACTICE* OR *DO* ANY MAGIC FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS?!

THIS *BLOWS CHUNKS.*

DENTISTRY

NOT TO MENTION I'LL BE THE *LAUGHINGSTOCK* OF SCHOOL.

DAD WON'T BE HERE TO PICK ME UP FOR A WHILE. MIGHT AS WELL GO TO THE MALL AND THE *FOOD COURT...*

NO TACOS. RIGHT.

OW.

MILKSHAKE BETTER

BLAM

PTOO!

FRAN SAYS RE

DAD WOULD SAY WAIT... MY TEETH ARE SAYING WAIT

BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT ZATARAS DO..

WHTTPND HRR?

WHAT...?!

DDNNYNN SEEWHCHHWY THTHFFF WNN?

FR SA RE

GGG

WHAT AM I GONNA DO WHEN I *CATCH UP* TO THE THIEF, HUH? *DROWN* HIM?

LOW LOW

I'M IN *NO* SHAPE TO *BACKWARDS-SPEAK* MY SPE...S

DAD ALWAYS SAID NOT TO *RELY* ON MY VOICE, ANYWAY...

HOPE THE *MARTIAL ARTS CLASSES* HE'S MADE ME TAKE ARE *ENOUGH*.

STPPNNTHNMMFF *THLAAAH!*

WHOOF!

DID I *REALLY* JUST SAY THAT? I'M GLAD HE CAN'T *UNDERSTAND* ME, OR I'D BE *TOTALLY* EMBARRASSED.

WHAP

AAAOOOWW!

GET *OFF* ME, YOU CRAZY KID!

KRASSH

OW, MY TEETH, JEEZ, THAT HURTS...!

IF THIS IS HOW IT'S GOING TO BE FOR TWO YEARS, I'D RATHER HAVE NO TEETH, LET ALONE CROOKED ONES!

EXCUSE ME...

...SINCE THESE ARE NOW CLEARLY DAMAGED, CAN I HAVE A TEN PERCENT DISCOUNT?

SPELL AND SPEAK!
THE EDUCATIONAL VOCABULARY TOY!
YOU TYPE IT, IT SAYS IT!

MY MOUTH *STILL* FEELS LIKE IT WAS HIT WITH A *SLEDGEHAMMER*...

I JUST WANT THESE STUPID BRACES *OFF*, FOR EVEN *FIVE MINUTES!*

TAP TAP TAP

C'MON, *C'MON*, MOVE THOSE *LEGS*, ZEE, YOU GOTTA GET *CLOSER...!*

TAP TAP TAP

Book Nook

ALMOST...

NO MORE *TIME...NOW!*

SPEAK SPELL

KLIK

SECARB EGAC YM EOF!

BGGG

COOL.

GROSS, BUT COOL.

OKAY, THAT'S THE LAST ONE. STILL SOME ***SHARP EDGES*** IN THERE, SO GET BACK TO THE ORTHODONTIST ***SOON,*** ALL RIGHT?

PROUD AS I ***AM*** OF YOU, DEAR DAUGHTER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE ***THINKING,*** GETTING INVOLVED IN SUCH A--

I ***KNOW,*** DAD, BUT ***COME ON,*** WHAT WOULD ***YOU*** HAVE DONE? PEOPLE WERE IN ***DANGER!***

KLAK!

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE ***RIGHT.*** YOU'RE GOING TO GROW UP TO BE A ***FINE*** ZATARA, ZATANNA...

...EVEN IF IT COSTS ME A ***FORTUNE*** IN ***DENTAL*** BILLS. NOW, LET'S GET BACK TO THE ***DOCTOR'S...***

UM... DAD...?

IS THERE ***ANY*** WAY, BEFORE WE GO, BASED ON WHAT I ***DID*** TODAY, THAT I COULD MAKE A, YOU KNOW, ***LAST REQUEST?***

YOU'RE GETTING ***BRACES,*** ZATANNA, YOU'RE NOT A ***CONDEMNED WOMAN.***

I ***KNOW,*** DAD, BUT ***STILL...***

-SIGH- TO THE ***FOOD COURT,*** THEN...***TACOS*** IT IS.

I LOVE YOU, DADDY.

THHNNDD!

"FOG CITY
CHRONICLE
HILL"

SYMMETRY

LILAH STURGES

STEPHANE ROUX

JOHN KALISZ

PAT BROSSEAU

AMANDA CONNER with PAUL MOUNTS

SAN FRANCISCO.

THE SUTRO BATHS.

WE SHOULD NOT BE HERE.

RELAX, WON'T YOU? WE ARE PERFECTLY SAFE.

WE SHALL BE DISCOVERED!

FEAR NOT, MY LOVE. THIS PLACE IS POSSESSED OF AN OLD MAGIC THAT PREVENTS *THEM* FROM SEEING US.

AND JUST IN CASE THE SURFACE FOLK *DO* ACCOST US, I COME ARMED.

OH, YOU ARE BOLD, SIR!

OI!

ANY OF YOU LOT KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND A *MACCY D'S*?

HOW DOES HE SEE US?

THE FAIR-CREATURE CHAINED TO HIS WEAPON, I'LL WAGER. THIS IS NO ORDINARY HUMAN.

YEH, WHAT *HE* SAID.

NOW LISTEN--TELL ME WHERE A MACCY D'S IS AND I'LL LET YOU LIVE.

YOU *KNOW* THAT I CAN VERY *EASILY* FIND--

I AIN'T *ASKING* YOU, THOUGH, *AM* I?

BE WARNED, SIR. WE ARE NO MERE MINNOWS. WE ARE SOLDIERS OF THE ABYSS, FIRST ORDER.

RAISE YOUR BLADE AGAINST ME AND IT WILL BE *YOUR* DEATH, NOT MINE.

YOU'RE A *FISH-MAN!*

THAT'S *WIZARD!*

NOW I'M GONNA KILL YOU.

RUN. OH, PLEASE RUN--

ULK!!

HYAAA!

SLASH

!AAAYH

SORRY, MATE. I DON'T THINK SO.

THEY CALL ME *BACKSLASH.*

ON ACCOUNT I CAN SWING MY MAGIC SWORD AND ***REWIND TIME,*** CAN'T I?

YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT THE MACCY D'S, MATE.

WELL, *THAT* WAS A LAUGH.

YOU ARE A MONSTER.

YEAH, BUT I LOOK WELL COOL, INNIT?

OKAY, HERE'S ONE. "DISAPPEAR."

EASY. RAEPPASID.

WENTZ ST.

NO PARKING ANYTIME TOW AWAY ZONE

ZAT A MISTRESS OF MAGIC

The Magic Mirror

GIVE ME SOMETHING HARDER.

OKAY, HOW ABOUT "ANNIHILATE."

UH...WAIT, GOT IT!

ETILLAHINNA.

SORRY, BOSS. NOT QUITE.

RATS.

I'LL HAVE TO STICK WITH *YORTSED* FOR THE TIME BEING.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STILL USE THOSE *FLASH CARDS.*

YORTSED SGNIR.

MY POWER IS EXPRESSED IN ***WORDS***, MIKEY. THE MORE WORDS I HAVE READY TO HAND, THE BETTER I AM.

I CAN'T ASK THE BAD GUY FOR A TIME OUT WHILE I TRY TO REMEMBER HOW TO SAY "DEFENESTRATE" BACKWARDS.

"DEFENESTRATE"?

IT MEANS TO THROW SOMETHING OUT OF A WINDOW.

IT'S ***ETARTSENEFED***, BY THE WAY.

EXIT

THE MORE SPECIFIC THE PHRASING, THE MORE CONTROLLED THE SPELL.

HENCE, FLASH CARDS.

OKAY, I'LL KEEP QUIZZING YOU. JUST REMEMBER THIS WHEN I FINALLY GET AROUND TO LEARNING ITALIAN--TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY.

TEERTS SEHTOLC!

GOTTA GO, MIKEY.

I HAVE A CITY TO LOOK AFTER.

THIS IS MY CITY.

IT BELONGS TO ME AND I BELONG TO IT.

WE EXIST TOGETHER IN AN ELEGANT SYMMETRY

THE MOST MAGICAL GIRL IN AMERICA AND ITS MOST MAGICAL CITY.

AND I DON'T MEAN "MAGICAL" IN THE TOURISTY SENSE. I MEAN REAL MAGIC

FROM THE DRAGON SLEEPING BENEATH THE TRANSAMERICA PYRAMID (WHOSE CHAINS WERE REINFORCED A TAD MORE SECURELY IN MAY OF 1906)—

HMMM.

--TO THE GHOSTS OF THE PRESIDIO

GUYS, I CAN'T HEAR IF YOU *ALL TALK AT ONCE.*

THE STREETS HERE BREATHE MAGIC

YOU CAN SENSE IT RUFFLING YOUR HAIR LIKE A BREEZE, TICKLING YOUR NOSE, MAKING YOUR FINGERTIPS TINGLE

QUERIA CANO

CARNE ASADA A LA PARILLA

S ENCHILADAS · PECHU

WE ALSO HAVE THE BEST TAQUERIAS IN THE MULTIVERSE

PUSH

I'VE VERIFIED THIS.

OUT WEST, FACING THE SEA, ARE THE WINDMILLS THAT KEEP THE LEVIATHAN AWAY FROM THE BEACH.

GREAT SWIRLS OF MYSTICAL ENERGY HERE.

BUT THE MOST SUPERNATURAL PLACE IN THE ENTIRE CITY, FOR MY MONEY, IS THE SUTRO BATHS

OPENED IN 1896 AND--

WHAT IS *THAT?*

BUT THERE'S NO MAGIC HERE TODAY.

ONLY BLOOD, AND DEATH, AND MY FURY.

KROW SEHTOLC!

EKAT EM OT EHT ENO OHW DELLIK MEHT!

AWRIIIGHT.

WHO ARE YOU?

REGRUB, EDOLPXE!

OI! I'M EATING THAT!

THIS IS A *BRILLIANT* BURGER.

HAVE A BITE?

OH, *PLEASE* RUN, MISS. POP RIGHT BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM, I BEG YOU!

QUIET, YOU. OR I'LL POP YOU LIKE A BOIL, YOU HEAR ME?

HEY! I'M *TALKING* HERE!

WHO ARE YOU, AND WHY DID YOU KILL THOSE MER-FOLK?

WHO I AM IS *BACKSLASH.*

AND WHY I KILLED THEM FISHIES IS MY BUSINESS, AIN'T IT?

IS THIS MONSTER HOLDING YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL, FAIRY?

DON'T MIND ME, JUST SAVE YOURSELF!

HE'LL KILL YOU. HE'S A MONSTER AND HE'LL KILL *YOU!*

I SAID, *SHUT* IT!

OR SHALL WE TEAR UP THE *OTHER* WING?

IT'S ALWAYS THE ONES IN THE FISHNETS WHO TALK TOUGH, INNIT?

COME AND GET IT, LOVE.

YOU'VE COME TO MY HOME AND YOU'VE DONE UNSPEAKABLE THINGS.

YOU WILL SURRENDER TO ME NOW, OR YOU'LL GO DOWN HARD.

DNIB MIH DNAH DNA TOOF!

!FOOT AND HAND HIM BIND

I THINK NOT!

SNAP

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

PORD EHT DROWS!

SLASH

SWORD THE DROP!

EACH TWIST OF MY WRIST PUSHES TIME BACKWARD. YOUR VOODOO DON'T WORK ON *ME*, FISHNETS.

SO DO YOUR WORST.

OG OT PEELS KCIUQ!

NOT QUICK ENOUGH!

!QUICK SLEEP TO GO

SLASH

HSALS

WELL, IF I CAN'T TALK, I CAN STILL *HIT*.

SMACK

OR NOT.

KCAMS

MAYBE THE THING TO DO HERE IS MAKE A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL

YOU CAN RUN AWAY, BUT I JUST DRAW YOU BACK...

...LIKE...

...THIS.

UNH!

WHERE AM I?

THIS IS BACKSLASH, THE RG42 MC, YEAH.

MY LYRICS ARE MASS-IVE. YOU GETTIN' PASS-IVE, AS I GET MORE AGGRESS-IVE.

I'M SPITTIN' WICKED LYRICS, I GOT YOU IN HYSTERICS.

I BE GETTIN' MERRY, LIVIN' LARGE AND SCARY, WITH MY STUPID FAIRY.

SHUT UP!

ULYSSES S. GRANT
APRIL 27 1822
JULY 23 1885

WHY YOU INTERRUPTIN' MY FLOW, WOMAN?

PARTLY BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF RHYTHM.

BUT MOSTLY BECAUSE I'D LIKE TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS WE'RE *DOING* HERE, AND *WHY*.

WHAT WE DOIN' IS I'M ABOUT TO HACK YOU UP INTO TINY BITS AND LISTEN TO YOU SCREAM.

AND *WHY*, ALWAYS WITH *WHY*.

WHY IS THE SAME REASON I NICK BEERS FROM THE SHOP, SAME REASON I GUTTED THEM FISH, SAME REASON I DO ANYTHING--

--'COS I WANT TO.

'COS I CAN.

NO OTHER REASON NECESSARY.

SO THEN. YOU WANT THE STABBY-STAB?

YOU KNOW WHAT I WISH?

I WISH I HAD A *RACECAR.*

OR THE OLD *SNICKER-SNACK?*

OR PERHAPS A NICE *LEVEL.*

OR EVEN A *KAYAK,* IF YOU FOLLOW ME.

WOW.

DAMMIT, I'M MAD.

DO YOU FOLLOW ME?

EGAD! NO BONDAGE!

!EGADNOB ON DAGE

WHAT THE HELL?

BECAUSE IT'S A *PALINDROME*, YOU GIT. SAME FORWARDS AS BACK.

YES, AND MY POWER IS SO BACKED UP NOW THAT IT'S DESPERATE TO COME OUT.

SO I'M ABOUT TO START SAYING ANY PALINDROME THAT COMES INTO MY HEAD, LIKE...

NURSES, RUN!

I'LL KILL YOU!

OH YEAH? HOW WILL YOU DO THAT WHEN YOU'RE COVERED IN CATS?

STACK CATS!

YOU ARE SO DEAD!

I REALIZE THIS NEXT ONE IS TOTALLY LUDICROUS, BUT I CAN'T THINK OF ANY *PRACTICAL* PALINDROMES.

OGRE FLOG A GOLFER, GO!

...FOR INSTANCE.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST--

--PUFF UP!

NO!

GOTCHA.

NIAHC, KAERB.

THANK YOU EVER SO MUCH.

MY PLEASURE.

HELP!

SNAP

YOU BROKE THE CHAIN!

MY WICKED SWORD IS *USELESS* NOW!

NOT *COMPLETELY* USELESS, ACTUALLY.

THIS MIGHT HURT A BIT.

LATER.

THAT WAS PRETTY CLEVER OF YOU.

I'M A CLEVER GIRL. AND I HAD HELP.

WHEN I GET OUT, I'M COMING FOR YOU!

NO SIR, PREFER PRISON!

OKAY, OKAY. YOU CAN STOP WITH THE PALINDROMES NOW.

I'M OFF TO BOOK YOUR FRIEND OVER THERE.

GO, DOG.

SERIOUSLY, CUT IT OUT.

STEP ON NO PETS!

MAY A MOODY BABY DOOM A YAM?

TARZAN RAISED DESI ARNAZ' RAT?

OKAY, FINE.

'SCUSE ME, MISS, BUT...

...WHAT AM I TO DO NOW? I HAVEN'T BEEN ON MY OWN IN SO VERY LONG.

WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO, I GUESS.

YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO IF YOU LIKE. IT'S A MAGICAL PLACE.

I'D MUCH PREFER TO FLY BACK TO ENGLAND, THANKS.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU COULD MAGIC ME UP A NEW WING?

I COULD. BUT IT WOULDN'T LAST FOR MUCH MORE THAN A DAY OR TWO.

A SPELL THAT COMPLEX WON'T LAST WITHOUT CONSTANT ATTENTION.

THAT WOULD BE JUST LONG ENOUGH.

AND IT WOULD BE LOVELY, SO LOVELY, TO FEEL WHOLE AGAIN. TO BE ***SYMMETRICAL*** AGAIN.

EB ELOHW!

THANK YOU! I'M IN YOUR DEBT...SO IF YOU EVER NEED ANYTHING, CALL ON ME!

I MIGHT, IF I KNEW YOUR NAME!

HANNAH, WHAT ELSE?

NO EVIL LIVE ON!

ZATANNA
13
11
6
5
7
3

THE CAT WITH THE CRYSTAL BALL EYE

PAUL DINI
writer

JAMAL IGLE

JON SIBAL
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU

ADAM HUGHES
cover

J'TAIME PARIS, MERCI! BONNE NUIT!

AND WITH SIX ENCORES, THE AMAZING ZATANNA HAS ENCHANTED GAY PAREE.

I DIDN'T DO IT ALONE, MIKEY. WE'RE A TEAM.

MAYBE, BUT WHILE THE QUARTERBACK WILL BE DINING WITH EUROTRASH NOBILITY, THE WIDE RECEIVER WILL BE DOWN WITH FRENCH PORN ON THE HOTEL PAY-PER-VIEW.

WE'RE BOTH SCORING TONIGHT.

HAVE FUN, DISGUSTING.

THANK YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS. YOU FLATTER ME.

AND YOU, MY CHARMING ZATANNA. YOU... MRROWW...MEOW... MEOW...

EXCUSE ME?

MEOW! MEOW!

MRROW.

HISSS!

MEOW!

WHUZZAT?

POP!

OH, DAMMIT...

HE'S BACK!

MEOW!

SHOO! SCAT!

MM-RROW?

WHO AM I KIDDING? THAT THING WON'T GO AWAY UNTIL I FEED IT--IF I'M LUCKY!

EAT YOUR KIBBLE, YOU EBON DEVIL, YOU.

WHEN DID YOU GET A CAT?

IT'S NOT MINE. I HAVE TO LET IT IN WHEN IT SHOWS UP. EVEN SAYING "SCAT" BACKWARDS WON'T MAKE IT GO AWAY.

OH, IS THIS ONE OF THOSE MAGIC THINGS?

YEAH, "ONE OF THOSE MAGIC THINGS." YOU SEE ITS LEFT EYE?

IT'S SOLID CRYSTAL. IT REVEALS THE FUTURE TO WHOEVER LOOKS INSIDE IT.

NO KIDDING! WHO DO YOU LIKE IN THE GIANTS-DODGERS GAME, KITTY?

LITTLE MONSTER WOKE ME UP. I WAS HAVING THAT WONDERFUL DREAM AGAIN...

THREE YEARS AGO, PARIS, THAT PRINCE... ZZZ...

OW!

HSSS!

I'M AWAKE!

HE SCRATCHED ME!

THE CAT ONLY APPEARS FOR TWO REASONS, MIKEY-- ONE, IT'S HUNGRY AND IT WILL DISAPPEAR AS SOON AS SOMEONE FEEDS IT...

OR TWO, IT IS CARRYING A SPECIFIC MESSAGE FOR ONE PERSON. IT WON'T LEAVE THIS PLANE OF REALITY UNTIL THAT ONE PERSON LOOKS INTO ITS EYE.

AND IT'S LOOKING AT YOU.

I WAS AFRAID OF THAT. OKAY, HORRIBLE...

PURRRRR..

RR-OWW... RR-OWW...

SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

WHAT'S THAT?

IT LOOKS LIKE AN OLD HEX SYMBOL FOR GOOD LUCK.

WELL, THAT'S NOT BAD, RIGHT?

RIGHT, BUT THE COLOR PATTERN IS STRANGE. I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE EXACTLY LIKE IT.

SOMETHING ELSE IS COMING THROUGH.

BROTHER NIGHT.

AFTER I ENCOUNTERED HIS ASTRAL FORM ON THE NEUTRAL PLANE, I KNEW WE'D MEET AGAIN.

LOOKS LIKE IT'LL BE SOONER THAN I'D HOPED.

NOW WHAT'S HE DOING?

RRR-OOOWW...

WHINING FOR A BELLY RUB. IT *IS* A CAT, AFTER ALL.

CRIPES! SOME FORTUNETELLER!

THE EYE'S TURNING ALL WEIRD AGAIN.

OH, I DON'T LIKE THIS...

THE SPECTRE!

HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS, RIGHT?

IF *YOU'VE* BEEN GOOD, SURE. IF NOT, SAY HELLO TO YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE.

THAT'S IT? HE JUST DELIVERS HIS MESSAGE OF DOOM AND RUNS OFF?

UNTIL HE RETURNS WITH ANOTHER VISION, OR GETS HUNGRY AGAIN, AND THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN EITHER ONE WILL BE.

IT SEEMS FATE HAS DECREED THE SPECTRE AND I MEET SOON, AND ***NOT*** FOR A PLAY DATE.

GNIKROW SEHTOLC RAEPPA!

SO I'M GOING TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE.

OT EHT ERTCEP!

SEE YA LATER, I HOPE!

DOES IT HURT?

YES.

GOOD. IT'S SUPPOSED TO.

I HAD NO PROBLEM WHEN PECK WAS COMATOSE, DETECTIVE COLTON. MODEL PRISONER, IN FACT. BUT NOW THAT HE'S BECOME ALMOST A DEITY TO THE OTHER PRISONERS...

YOU WANT BROTHER NIGHT TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER FACILITY. I DON'T BLAME YOU.

THERE ARE PLACES FOR HIM. BELLE REVE, THE SLAB. EVEN ARKHAM. THEY ARE ALL BETTER SUITED TO HOUSE...EXTREME PERSONALITIES.

EXTREME DOESN'T BEGIN TO DESCRIBE ELDON PECK.

MY HOUR HAS COME, BROTHERS. I MUST LEAVE YOU FOR NOW. YOU FAITHFUL FEW, BEARERS OF THE MARK, WILL AWAIT MY SUMMONS.

YOU OTHERS WHO SERVED AS MY BODYGUARDS DURING MY INTERNMENT NOW HAVE THE HONOR OF BEARING ME TO FREEDOM.

LOOKS LIKE PECK'S ARRANGING HIS OWN TRANSFER. HE'S HEADED TOWARD THE GATE.

IS HE INSANE?! THERE'S NO WAY OUT!

[illegible]

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE MESSING WITH

...I... UH...
SON OF A BITCH...!

UP.

STOP HIM!
BRRAATTTT!

OH, I DON'T THINK SO!

BLAM!
BLAM!
WELL. IF IT ISN'T MY EVER-PRESENT SHADOW, DETECTIVE COLTON.
HERE'S WHERE WE PART COMPANY.
DON'T MOVE!

DONAUH!

BRAHRR!

GRRAWL..!

THAT'S AS FAR AS YOU GO...

TEZAK!

HEH. DALE COLTON. I SENSED THERE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT YOU THE NIGHT I VISITED YOUR OFFICE.

A COMMON AFFINITY FOR MAGIC OF COURSE, BUT SOMETHING DEEPER, DARKER. I'M OVERJOYED TO BE PROVEN RIGHT.

YOU'RE INSANE.

DONAUH!

GRRR!

THE SPELL WILL WEAR OFF SOON, BUT UNTIL IT DOES, HE'LL RIP OUT YOUR THROAT IF YOU TRY TO GET UP.

OH. AND ONE LAST THING. IF YOU EVER HAPPEN TO SEE HER AGAIN...

RRR!

SAY HELLO TO JENNY MYERS FOR ME.

NO!

"JUST WING IT." THAT'S YOUR STRATEGY FOR THE PRESENTATION?

YOU KNOW HOW I ROLL, CARL. I WARM UP THE ROOM, GIVE THE BOSS THE OVERVIEW...

THEN YOU AND JUNE BREAK OUT THE STATISTICS FOR THE KILL.

TRANSLATION: YOU GOOFED OFF ALL WEEKEND AND WE HAVE TO SAVE YOUR ASS AGAIN. WE'RE LUCKY TO HAVE THIS ACCOUNT, NED.

IF THE BOSS DOESN'T THINK HE'S GETTING A HUNDRED AND TEN PERCENT FROM US, HE'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO SHUTTER OUR DIVISION...

WHOA! GET A LOAD OF THE FREAKAZOID BUMMING A RIDE!

I THINK WE SHOULD PICK HIM UP! WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GIVING RIDES TO GOONS WANDERING OUTSIDE A PRISON. YEAH, THAT'S REAL SMART.

WHY, THAT'S BROTHER NIGHT.

WHO?

BROTHER NIGHT. YOU KNOW, HIGH PRIEST OF THE CHURCH OF FINAL DARKNESS, BLACK WIZARD, DEBAUCHER, MURDERER.

JUNE, I WAS KIDDING.

OH, OF COURSE. NIGHT IS GOD.

NIGHT IS GOD.

GOOD MORNING. ROOM FOR ONE MORE?

UH, I...

666 HAIGHT STREET, PLEASE.

RIGHT AWAY, MY LORD.

NIGHT IS GOD.

REALLY? I'M GONE SIX MONTHS AND THE TEMPLE I'VE OWNED FOR FORTY-THREE YEARS IS NOW A "GOTH CLUB." OUTSTANDING.

WE'RE CLOSED. COME BACK AFTER TEN.

I LOVE YOUR LOOK, DARLIN'. ANYONE ELSE HERE WITH YOU?

UH, JUST THE MANAGER AND THE SOUND GUY.

HEY. CREEP. SHE SAID WE'RE CLOSED.

THERE'S AN OVERTURNED CAR WITH THREE BODIES IN IT BURNING HALFWAY DOWN THE BLOCK. GET IN IT, WILL YOU?

YES, SIR.

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.

"YOU SEE THEM, DON'T YOU, THOMAS SLOCUM? THE FACES OF FRIENDS, OF FAMILY, OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO TRUSTED YOU...

"BELIEVED IN YOUR PROMISES OF WEALTH, OF A LIFE FREE FROM WANT..."

NO! *NO!* THIS ISN'T MY FAULT!

LOOK AT THEM, SLOCUM! EVERY ONE OF THEM NOW PENNILESS! DEVASTATED BY YOUR RAPACIOUS, UNCONSCIONABLE GREED!

AND WHEN YOU WERE EXPOSED, YOU TOOK EVERY CENT YOU COULD LAY YOUR HANDS ON AND RAN!

YOU CAN'T *DO* THIS! I'VE GOT *LAWYERS!*

INDEED YOU DO, MR. SLOCUM, AN ARMY OF DRONES JUST AS INURED TO HUMAN SUFFERING AS YOU.

BEHOLD THE COSTLY, IMPENETRABLE BARRIER YOU HAD THEM CREATE TO SHIELD YOURSELF FROM THOSE YOU'VE DRIVEN TO DESPAIR.

YOU COULD HAVE ADMITTED YOUR CRIMES. GROVELED IN FRONT OF YOUR PEERS FOR THEIR JUDGMENT.

DON'T DO THIS! PLEASE!

NOW YOU FACE *MINE! GUILTY!*

AHHH!

EEEK...

PAF!

AND...NOW YOU'RE A RAT. THAT WAS NOT PART OF MY PLAN.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GETTING TOO GHOULISH, EVEN FOR YOU. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.

I DO, ACTUALLY. I METICULOUSLY STRUCTURE EACH PUNISH-MENT TO FIT EACH CRIME. I DON'T NEED IMPROVISATION FROM AN OUTSIDER.

REALLY? BECAUSE I THOUGHT WITH THE WHOLE GREED THING, THE BILLIONAIRE INVESTOR DRIVING HIS FRIENDS INTO POVERTY, IT WOULD BE VERY FITTING IF HE LIVED OUT HIS LIFE AS A RAT.

IT'S STILL PUNISHMENT, RIGHT?

I DON'T TELL YOU HOW TO USE A THUMB TIP, DON'T TELL ME HOW TO ADMINISTER GOD'S WRATH.

WOW, THAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M COMPLETELY NONEXISTENT ON A COSMIC SCALE.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, THEN. WHAT DO YOU WANT, ZATANNA?

WE HAVEN'T ALWAYS SEEN EYE TO EYE...

OR EVEN EYE *FOR* AN EYE, FOR THAT MATTER, BUT I NEED TO KNOW... IS THERE ANY REASON YOU SHOULD BE ANGRY WITH ME?

THERE *WASN'T*, UNTIL YOU INTERFERED.

EVEN SO, YOUR "WHIMSICAL" TREATMENT OF MY VICTIM DOUBLED HIS MISERY IN HIS LAST TERRIFIED MOMENT. OF THAT, AT LEAST, I APPROVE.

UGH!

WHY DO YOU ASK?

I SAW A VISION FROM AN ACCURATE MYSTICAL SOURCE THAT INDICATED YOU AND I MIGHT BE HEADED FOR A FIGHT.

A SHORT FIGHT, NO DOUBT.

WHAT, YOU DID SUCH A GOOD JOB DISPENSING GOD'S RAGE, HE GAVE YOU HIS EGO, TOO?

I'M HERE TO PREVENT ***ANY*** FIGHT, YOU COSMIC DOUCHE!

ZATANNA ZATARA. THE VIRTUE OF YOUR SOUL, THOUGH SORELY TESTED AT TIMES, HAS NEVER BEEN CONTESTED. IN SHORT...

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME.

LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY.

FINE.

EMOH!

HE CAN BE SUCH A JERK.

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT JENNY MYERS. MOM AND DAD REFUSED TO TALK ABOUT HER.

NAPA STATE HOSPITAL

THE S.F.P.D. FILES HAD ONLY THE BASIC FACTS--SINGLE CAUCASIAN FEMALE, 19 YEARS OLD, ARRESTED IN 1974 FOR TRYING TO KILL HER NEWBORN BABY.

THE REPORT SAID BOTH JENNY AND THE CHILD WERE NEARLY DEAD FROM BLOOD LOSS. SEEMS SHE HAD CARVED DOZENS OF SMALL CROSSES INTO BOTH THEIR BODIES. THE REASON WAS NEVER EXACTLY CLEAR.

WHEN LATER ASKED WHY SHE HAD DONE IT, JENNY LAUNCHED INTO A LONG, INCOHERENT RAMBLE ABOUT HOW SHE HAD BEEN USED TO GIVE BIRTH TO A DEMON CHILD.

THE CROSSES WERE THE ONLY WAY, SHE BELIEVED, TO SAVE BOTH THEIR SOULS FROM HELL.

THEN SHE LAPSED INTO SILENCE. SHE HASN'T SPOKEN A WORD SINCE.

THE CHILD WAS ADOPTED BY AN OAKLAND COUPLE, GERALD AND MARIE COLTON. THEY DID THEIR BEST TO GIVE HIM A NORMAL LIFE, BUT...

A KID GROWS UP SCARRED, HE LEARNS TO ASK QUESTIONS.

HELLO, JENNY.

YOU. I TRIED TO SAVE YOU.

BUT HE'S SEEN YOU NOW, I CAN TELL. HE'S TOUCHED YOU. LIKE HE TOUCHED ME, ***TOOK ME,*** ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

HE KNOWS YOU'RE OF HIM, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS. SO MANY OTHERS...

AND NOW I KNOW. BROTHER NIGHT...

...IS MY FATHER.

ZATANNA

WINGMAN

ADAM BEECHEN

JAMAL IGLE TRAVIS MOORE

JON SIBAL JOHN DELL

colorists

RICHARD & TANYA HORIE

letterer

PAT BROSSEAU

cover

ADAM HUGHES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, LET'S HEAR IT ONE MORE TIME FOR THE MAGICAL MAGNIFICENCE OF ZATANNA AND ZACHARY ZATARA!

I'M GOING TO KILL YOU.

BLAH BLAH BLAH.

YOU BLEW *THREE CUES* OUT THERE *AND* LEFT ME HOLDING THE BAG!

LITERALLY! THE BAG WITH THE *RABBITS!*

YOUR *STAGECRAFT* IS *ABYSMAL!* YOUR *PROFESSIONALISM* IS *NOWHERE!*

TELL IT TO THE *STANDING OVATION* BACK THERE.

THAT'S NOT THE POINT, ZACH! THE *POINT* IS YOU'RE NOT TAKING THIS *SERIOUSLY!*

YOU DON'T TAKE *ANYTHING* SERIOUSLY!

NOPE. AND I'M MAKING A PRETTY SWEET *LIVING* AT IT.

YOU'RE MY *COUSIN*, ZEE, NOT MY *DAD*. OR *YOUR* DAD. NO ONE GIVES A *RIP* ABOUT A FEW OVERLOOKED DETAILS.

YOU MAY WANT TO *RETHINK* THAT, *ESPECIALLY* GIVEN THE KINDS OF TROUBLE OUR FAMILY ATTRACTS!

I'LL PUT IT *TOPS* ON MY TO-DO LIST. *TOMORROW MORNING.*

THIS CONVERSATION ISN'T EVEN *HALF* OVER, ZACH!

GOOD, BECAUSE I WAS WORRIED WE'D RUN OUT OF THINGS TO TALK ABOUT...

YOUR *INATTENTION* TO THE *FINER POINTS* COULD GET SOMEONE AROUND YOU *KILLED* SOMEDAY!!

OR GET *YOU* KILLED!!

THERE'S A WORLD *OUTSIDE* OF YOU, ZACH! FOR *EVERYONE'S* BENEFIT, YOU BETTER--

--WAIT. WHERE *ARE* WE?

OH, WERE YOU TOO *ANGRY* TO PAY ATTENTION TO *DETAIL*, ZEE? TSK.

WE'RE AT MY *AFTER-HOURS OFFICE.*

FEEL FREE TO KEEP *LECTURING.* I'LL PICK UP EVERY *TWELFTH SENTENCE* BETWEEN SONGS.

TORQUE

AAGH! "OONCE" MUSIC! I HATE "OONCE" MUSIC!

IT'S CALLED "HOUSE" MUSIC, CUZ.

DOES THE BEAT GO "HOUSE-HOUSE-HOUSE-HOUSE"? NO!

IT GOES "OONCE-OONCE-OONCE-OONCE," OVER AND OVER AGAIN! IT'S LIKE WATER TORTURE!

WOULD SOMEBODY RATHER BE AT HOME WITH A ROOMFUL OF CATS, CURLED UP UNDER A COMFORTER, READING A ROMANCE NOVEL?

GETTING A LITTLE OLD FOR NIGHTS OUT?

GIVE ME THAT!

AND DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT!

HEY!

COMING TO THIS CLUB IS A *PERFECT* EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!

YOU'RE IN SUCH A *HURRY* TO GET TO--

HEY!

--*EW!* EW EW EW EW *EW!* *EW!*

GET YER NUMBER?

GET YER NUMBER?

OCSID STEKCAJ REVO THGIT STROHS!

OH MY GOD, GET ME ANOTHER THREE OF THESE, QUICK...!

ZACH? *ZACH?!*

OKAY, ZATANNA, STOP BEING THE *GOOD*, ONLY-SLIGHTLY-OLDER COUSIN...GIVE HIM 'TIL THE COUNT OF *THREE*, THEN TELEPORT YOURSELF *HOME*...

...*BURN* THE COMFORTER AND THE ROMANCE NOVELS...

...AND RENT YOURSELF A *MOVIE*, OR...

...ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN COMING TO TORQUE A *LOT*, LATELY, AND I'VE NOTICED YOU HERE EVERY TIME...

WELL, THERE *ARE* PEOPLE WHO'D TELL YOU THIS PLACE IS SO POPULAR *BECAUSE* ZACHARY ZATARA COMES HERE, BUT I THINK THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL *GOOD* ABOUT MYSELF...

...I'M REALLY VERY *SHY*, YOU SEE...

HEY! CAN YOU GET YOUR CREEP ON *AFTER* I'M DONE YELLING AT YOU?!

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MY *MUCH* OLDER COUSIN, ZATANNA. POOR THING ALMOST *NEVER* GETS OUT OF THE HOUSE. I BROUGHT HER HERE AS A *CHARITY CASE*, REALLY.

HRRR..

NICE MEETING YOU.

ZACHARY, LET'S GO SOMEWHERE MORE *PRIVATE*, HM?

ANYTHING YOU SAY...UH, WHAT *IS* YOUR NAME, ANYWAY?

FINE! I'M GOING *HOME!* THIS IS LIKE TALKING TO A *BRICK WALL IN A TUX!*

MY NAME IS *YUKI.*

YUKI-ONNA.

WHAT?

ZACHARY!

ZACHARY!

ZA--

ASSASSIN

ROOM FULL OF HOT GIRLS, NATURALLY, HE PICKS THE SUCCUBUS...

OKAY, YUKI-ONNA...I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S ANY CHANCE YOU'LL JUST SLITHER BACK TO JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY LIKE A GOOD LITTLE SUCCUBUS...?

YOU'RE AMUSING, DAUGHTER OF ZATARA...

...BUT WITH THE BOY'S POWER ADDED TO MY OWN, WHY SHOULD I GO ANYWHERE?

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR MIGHT IS HERE FOR THE TAKING AS WELL?

ROOLF ESIR PU OT FLIGNE REH.

ROOLF YACED.

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, YUKI.

AND I SHALL, ZATANNA. FOR WHILE MY MAGIC MASKS OUR ACTIONS FROM THOSE AROUND US, OUR FELLOW PATRONS REMAIN MORE THAN SUSCEPTIBLE TO ATTACK.

ENACIRRUH SDNIW.

ELBBUB ESOLCNE MEHT!

THAT WON'T *HURT* YUKI-ONNA...*OR* ZACH, BUT IT'LL BUY ME TIME TO *CLEAR THE DECKS...*

BEEEWOOOSHH

BBBBRRNNGGGGGG

THAT'S IT, NICE AND ORDERLY, NO TRAMPLING...

ORDINARILY, I AM A CREATURE OF THE *SNOWS*... BUT FIRE...WHY *NOT?*

ERIF REDNU REH TEEF.

HAVE TO WRAP THIS UP *FAST*, BEFORE THE *FIRE DEPARTMENT* SHOWS UP AND SHE USES *THEM* AS *HUMAN SHIELDS*...

TRYING TO FIGHT YUKI-ONNA WITH *ZACH* AS HER "*BODYGUARD*" IS HARD *ENOUGH.*

FFASSSHH

I CAN'T GET TO HER *THROUGH* ZACH BECAUSE OUR POWERS DON'T WORK ON *LIVING* THINGS--*BESIDES* THE FACT THAT I DON'T WANT TO *HURT* MY HORN-DOG COUSIN...

I'M JUST GONNA HAVE TO *OUTFLANK* HER.

WHICH MEANS USING THE ITEMS AT *HAND.*

BULC STHGIL ERALF... DNILB ÝM EOF!

AAAIIEEEE!

GNIGGIR LLAF!

KA-RASHAH

LEPSID--

GRRRAAH!!

SHRAKK

IT'S MAGICIANS LIKE YOU...

...WHO TURN SUCCUBI LIKE *ME*...

...OFF OF *MAGIC!*

KOOOM

AAAAAAAAA!!!

BAD... OH, THIS IS BAD... UP, KIDDO... GET UP...

KRAK KOOM

IF... IF I GET ZACHARY OUT OF THIS... I'M SENDING HIM TO A *SEMINARY*... END OF STORY...

OH, *NO*...

...SHE'S *BURNING* HIM OUT...

GOTTA TAKE ONE LAST CHANCE, A *BIG* CHANCE, THAT SHE DOESN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND OUR POWERS...

...OR, RATHER, THEIR *LIMITS*...

E-ENOUGH... ENOUGH...

I FOUGHT YOU WITH *HONOR*, YUKI-ONNA. NOW ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU DO ME A *FINAL COURTESY*...

YOU WILL *STILL* GAIN MY POWER, BUT LET THE *FLESH OF MY FLESH* LAY ME TO REST!

YES...TO BE *MURDERED* BY *YOUR OWN*... *COURTESY* FOR YOU, *DELICIOUS* FOR ME...

LLUP REH TRAEH HGUORHT REH TSEHC.

KL-KOOOOOM

L-LIES! LIES AND DECEPTIONS!

AND YOU SAY YOU FOUGHT ME WITH HONOR...

THIS FROM THE SPECTRAL FLOOZY WHO'S MADE AN ETERNAL LIVING POSING AS A BIMBO TO PREY ON MALES.

PLEASE.

I EITHER HAD THE ***BEST*** NIGHT OF MY LIFE--***OWWW***--OR THE ***WORST***...

I THINK I LEFT MY ***PURSE*** HERE...? WHEN WE ***EVACUATED***? BUT SINCE THERE'S ***NO*** FIRE, I THOUGHT MAYBE...

YOU GOT TURNED INTO A ***SUCCUBUS'S HAND PUPPET*** BECAUSE, ***ONCE AGAIN***, YOU JUST JUMPED INTO A SITUATION WITHOUT CARING ABOUT ANY ***DETAILS*** YOU MIGHT MISS!

THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE NOT A ***DRIED-UP HUSK*** IS THAT YUKI-ONNA DIDN'T KNOW OUR POWERS DON'T WORK ON ***LIVING TISSUE!*** YOU'RE LUCKY I--

EX... EXCUSE ME...?

I'LL TAKE IT FROM ***HERE***, CUZ. THANKS FOR THE ***HELP***, TONIGHT.

YOU'RE A ***HELLUVA*** WINGMAN.

...!

NOW, THEN...***WHERE*** WAS THE LAST PLACE YOU SAW YOUR PURSE, YOU ***POOR*** THING...?

I HOPE SHE'S ***MORDRU*** IN DISGUISE. IT'D SERVE HIM ***RIGHT***.

HEY.

HEY.

GOD, I SHOULD ***KNOW*** BETTER BY NOW--NO MORE ***DOUBLE BILLS*** WITH ZACH...HE HAS ALL THE ***FUN***, AND I WIND UP TAKING ALL THE...

GET YER NUMBER?

...LUMPS.

GET YER NUMBER?

CLOSING TIME

ZATANNA

BATMAN

WITCH HUNT

DEREK FRIDOLFS
writer

JAMAL IGLE
penciller

JOHN DELL
inker

JOHN KALISZ
colorist

PAT BROSSEAU
letterer

ADAM HUGHES
cover

LATER, ZEE!

YOU'VE EARNED THE WEEK OFF! MAKE THE MOST OF IT.

A LIFE OF GLOBETROTTING. BACK-TO-BACK-TO-BACK PERFORMANCES. VEGAS. BALI. NEW YORK. EXCEEDING EVEN *MY* LIMITS.

NO ONE SAID THAT CAPTIVATING AN AUDIENCE ISN'T WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE. IT PUTS A SERIOUS DRAIN ON MY MAGICAL RESERVES.

NOTHING THAT SOME QUIET MEDITATION AND A GOOD NIGHT OF REST WON'T FIX.

For a job well done!

"FOR A JOB WELL DONE." YOU ARE SO LOVED, MISTRESS OF MAGIC.

EVEN IF YOUR NERVE ENDINGS ARE TOO FRIED TO ACCEPT IT.

NOW TO FIND MY HAPPY PLACE.

SCENE
KRASSH
PLAYBOOK
THHIIP

THE TASTE OF COPPER... AND...SOMETHING ELSE. MAYBE POISON? NOT GOOD. NOT NOW.

THANK THE STARS IT DIDN'T PIERCE MY JUGULAR!

I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE SYMBOL. NOT SPELL-ENHANCED, AT LEAST. IT ONLY READS "UNFRIENDLY." FEELS THAT WAY TOO.

MMFPH!

WHOA. WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S HITTING ME FAST. FEELING WOOZY.

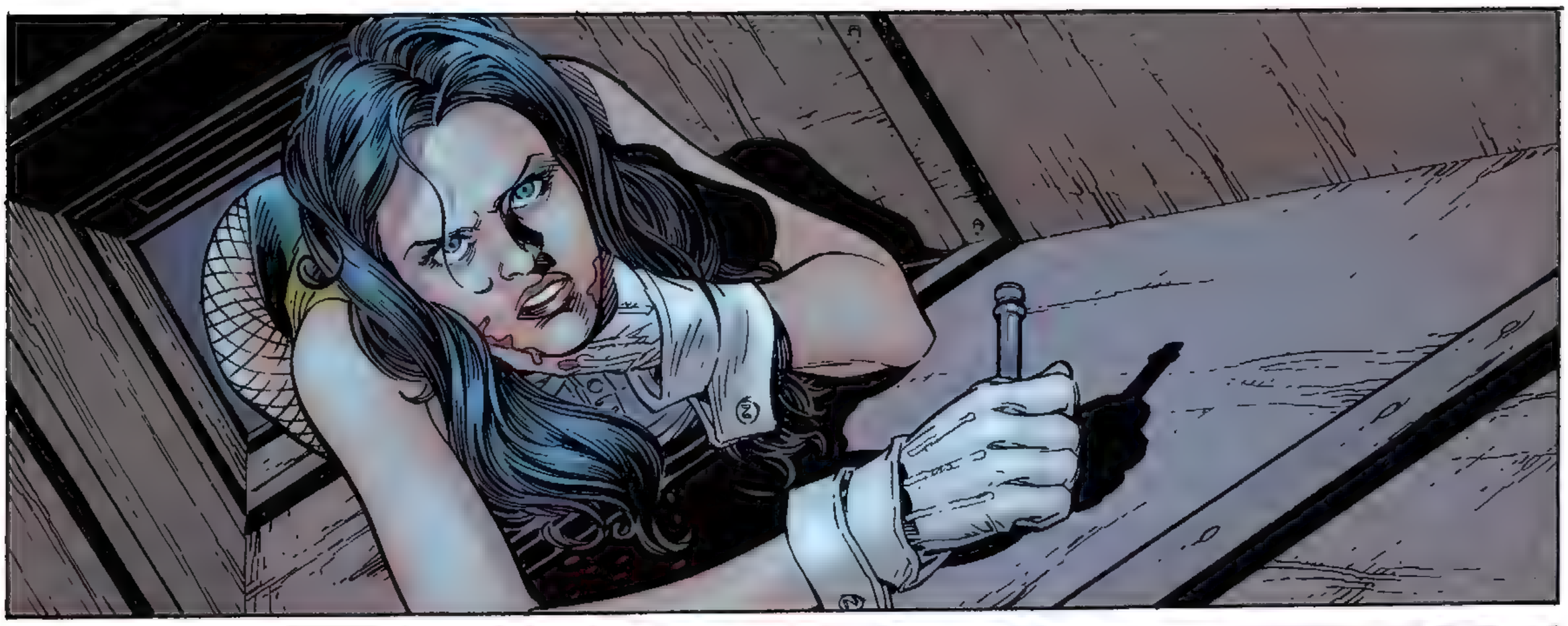
SLURRING SPEECH...CAN'T EVEN FORM WORDS. I'M USELESS *AND* TAPPED OUT.

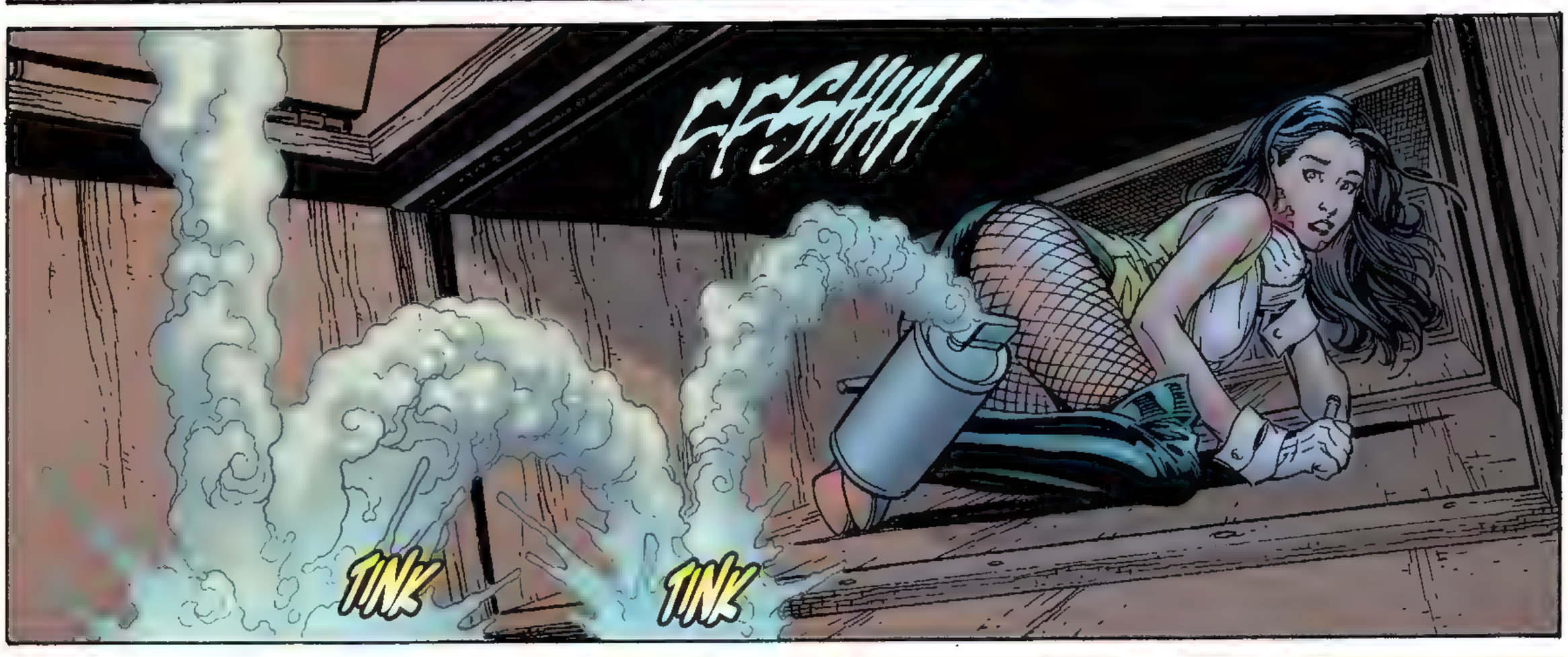
AND NOT GOING TO WAIT AROUND TO GET CAUGHT.

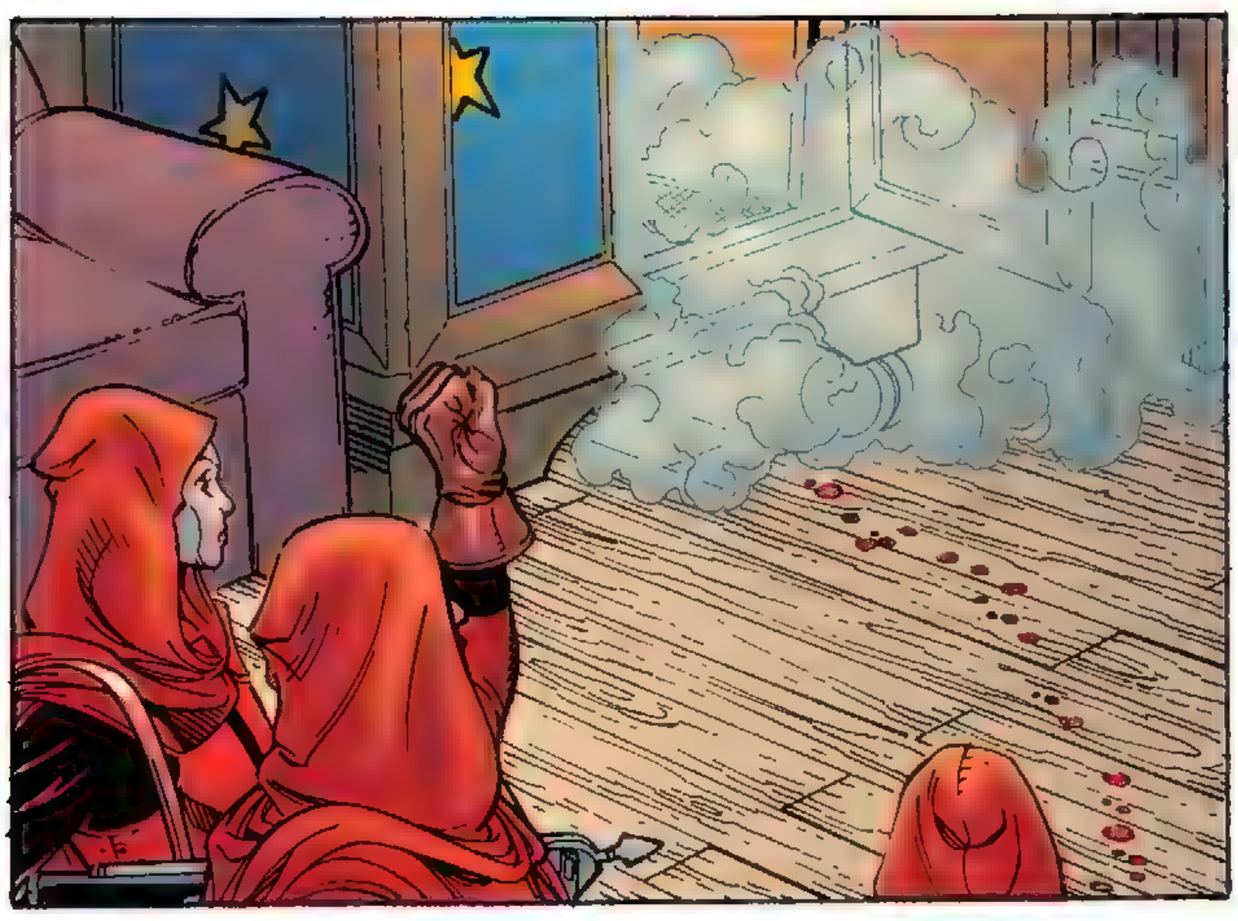
FLIP EVERYTHING. SHE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR.

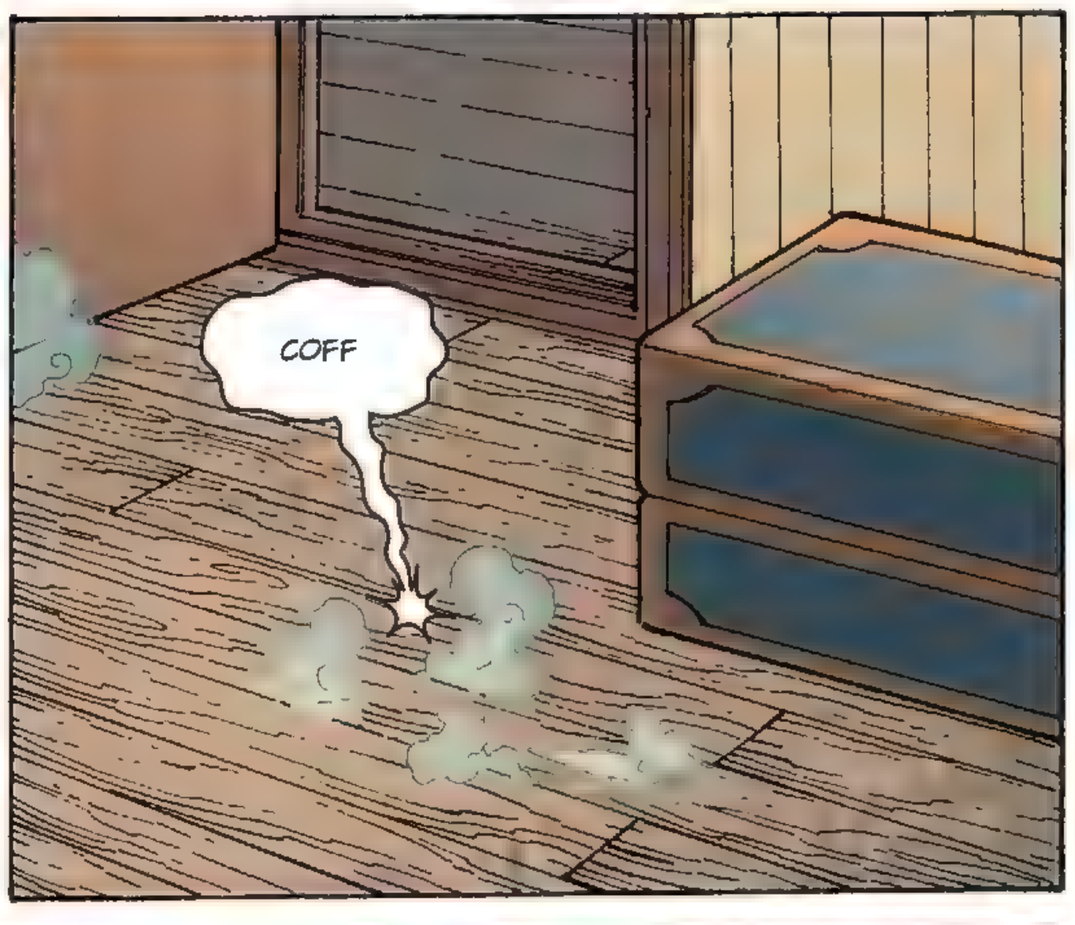
I DEFINITELY HIT HER. NOT ENOUGH TO KILL...

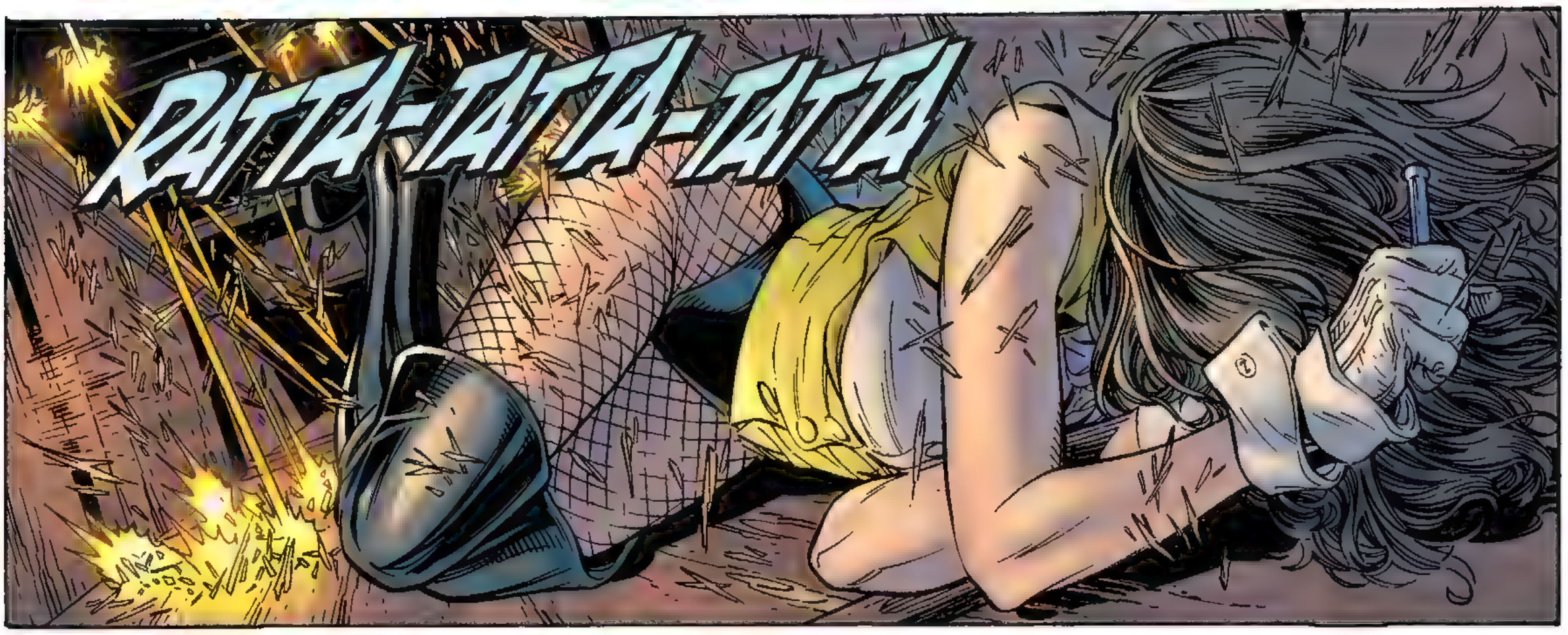
...OR CRAWL AWAY VERY FAR.




FFSHH
TINK
TINK




COFF


RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

MILITARY TACTICS. A MERCENARY UNIT OF SOME TYPE? DEFINITELY NOT MAGIC USERS

DOESN'T MAKE 'EM ANY LESS DANGEROUS.

OHMAHGOD! I THOUGHT WE'D MISSED YOU. CAN YOU SIGN THIS FOR ME?

HOLD ON AND LEMME GET A PICTURE!

KA-POW

REALLY DON'T NEED THIS RIGHT NOW. BUT I CAN'T EVEN TELL THEM THEY'RE IN DANGER. AND SO IS ANYONE ELSE STRAGGLING AFTER THE SHOW.

WAIT... SHOW. DON'T TELL.

HOPE THAT'S THE LAST OF 'EM. I CAN'T DEAL WITH ANY LATE ADMIRERS, MUCH LESS SURVIVE MYSELF.

KEEP MOVING, ZEE! I'M SURE THEY HEARD THAT

LOOKS EMPTY GOOD!

THIS END UP

AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO DO THIS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY!!!!

THIS STINKS OF AN AMBUSH. *GEE, ZEE...YA THINK?!*

BOOKED SEVEN GIGS FOR THE WEEKEND, AND THE MAJORITY BY FIRST-TIME CLIENTS. SIGHT UNSEEN. BACKGROUND CHECK SKIPPED. YOU SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER! THEY USED "FUNDRAISERS FOR DISABLED KIDS" TO GET MY GUARD DOWN, AND I FELL FOR IT.

DAD ALWAYS SAID, "ATTACK THE HEART FIRST, AND ALL DEFENSES FALL."

OKAY, SALVE... WORK YOUR... MAGIC—

TODAY, YOUR TRAINING WILL BE IN MORE THAN JUST MAGIC.

THOSE THAT ARE FEARED AND MISUNDERSTOOD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HUNTED THROUGHOUT HISTORY. YOU MUST LEARN TO PROTECT YOURSELF WHEN WORDS AREN'T ENOUGH.

IN THOSE SITUATIONS, YOU'LL NEED TO RELY ON THIS.

AND THIS.

THUNK THUNK

THUNK

KATTA-TATTA-TATTA

THAT WAS TOO CLOSE. I CAN'T PASS OUT LIKE THAT AGAIN. STAY SHARP!

WHAT'VE WE HERE?

SHANG

WHAT'S IN THE HAT?

MMLPH!

YOUR FACE!

RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

PLEEEASE LET THIS WORK!

CHAFF!

RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

THIP

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A SHOWSTOPPER!

UP THERE!

RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

RATTA-TATTA-TATTA

I TAGGED HER IN THE LEG DURING THE ESCAPE.

SHE WON'T GET FAR NOW. EVERYONE RELOAD.

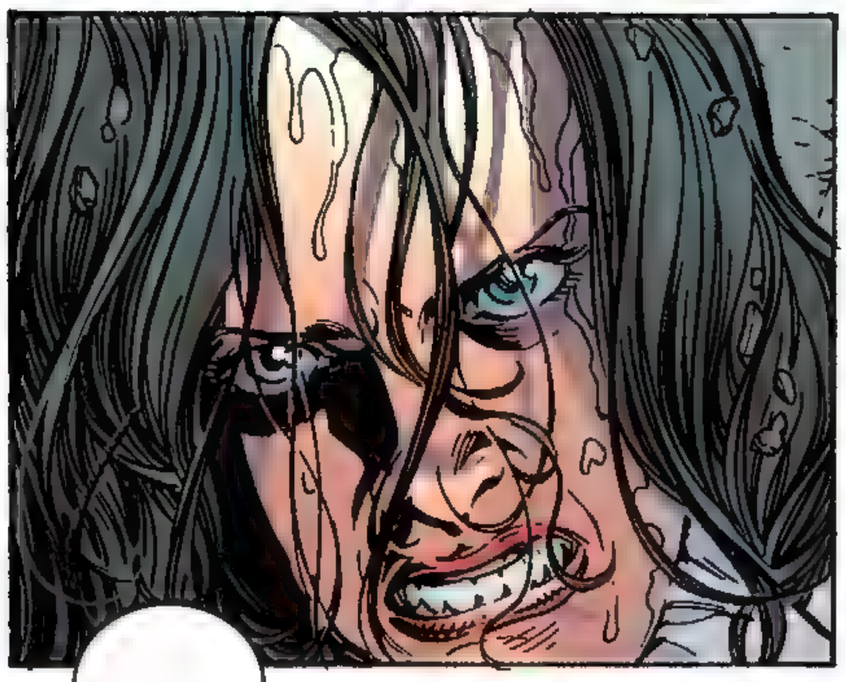
REST ROOM

OUT OF ORDER

REST ROOM

OUT OF ORDER

BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAKKA


...

RELAX. IT'S ALMOST OVER NOW.

WHAT YOU'RE FEELING IS THE TOXIN FINISHING ITS EFFECTS. IT'S HOW WE IMMEDIATELY IMMOBILIZE YOUR KIND FROM USING YOUR...GIFTS. WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR AWHILE.

"WE COME FROM A LONG LINE OF HUNTERS, STRETCHING BACK MANY GENERATIONS. OUR PREY HAS TAKEN MANY FORMS...***WARLOCKS, VAMPIR, WEREBEASTS, SASQUATCHEN***...ALL ABORTIONS OF NATURE AND BLASPHEMOUS TO OUR ***CREATOR.***

"OUR FOREFATHERS BANDED TOGETHER TO HUNT THEM. SOME EXTERMINATED FROM BELIEF, SEEN ONLY AS MYTHS. OTHERS ARE ON THE VERGE OF BEING WIPED OUT.

"SOCIETY CALLS THEM ILLUSIONISTS, CONJURERS, AND MAGICIANS. BUT THE HUNTERS ONLY REFER TO THEM BY THEIR PROPER NAME...

"WITCHES."

THE CRAFT YOU PRACTICE IS A ***DISEASE.*** WE ARE SIMPLY RIDDING THE EARTH OF ITS PESTILENCE.

THANK YOU...

...FOR GIVING ME ENOUGH TIME...FOR MY OINTMENT...

...TO HEAL MY VOCAL CORDS.

BRAKKA

BRAKKA-BRAKKA-BRAKKA

STELLUB EMOCEB REPAP!

CLIK CLIK CLIK

YOU'RE SO USED TO ACCEPTING SURRENDER THAT YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN YOU'VE BEEN *PLAYED* FOR DEFEAT.

OG OT LAIRT!

MASSACHUSETTS, 1692.

FA-FOOM

DID YOU SEE THEM?

THE SKY FLASHED!

I SAW THEM FLYING.

MAGIC!

FATHER KENNETH! WE MUST HELP THESE LESS FORTUNATE.

YES, MY BROTHER.

TOWNSPEOPLE OF *SALEM!* ARE WE NOT JUST?

WE *WILL* HELP THESE HEATHENS TO SEE THE LIGHT...

...BE THEY WITCH OR WARLOCK.

THEY PLED THAT THEY ARE NOT OF MAGIC, TO ALL WHO WERE WITNESS

THEIR CRIES WENT UNHEEDED. THEIR LIES IGNORED.

I'LL LET 'EM SWEAT A MOMENT BEFORE I BRING THEM BACK TO OUR TIME...AND OUR *PRISONS*.

TO TAKE A PAGE FROM THEIR BOOK... JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED

END

ZATANNA

THE SORCERESS' APPRENTICE

ADAM BEECHEN
writer

VICTOR IBÁÑEZ
artist

EGO
colorist

DAVE SHARPE
letterer

AFTER A MATINEE IN STUTTGART AND A CORPORATE GIG IN *FRANKFURT*, ZATANNA HOPPED THE *RED-EYE* BACK TO *GOTHAM*.

"THE THINGS I DO FOR *TICKETHOLDERS*," SHE THOUGHT GRUMPILY.

NORMALLY AN *ACE* SLEEPER ON PLANES, BETWEEN *POST-SHOW ADRENALINE* AND THE *UNHAPPY BABY* BACK IN THE FIRST ROW OF COACH.

...*THIS* TIME ZEE DIDN'T HIT *SLUMBERLAND* UNTIL MOST OF THE ATLANTIC WAS IN THE *REAR-VIEW*.

THE WONDERFUL DREAM ABOUT *BIMINI, BRADLEY COOPER*, THE *JUGGLER* THAT OPENED FOR HER IN STUTTGART, AND A BUCKET OF *COCOA BUTTER* HAD JUST HIT THE *GOOD* PART.

THERE *WASN'T* A PART IN THE DREAM FOR A *NIGHT-FLYING GOOSE* AT ALL...

WHONNK

A *STUPID*, NIGHT-FLYING GOOSE

WHOOOMF

A STUPID, NIGHT-FLYING GOOSE WITH *NO* APPRECIATION FOR COCOA BUTTER...

BUT IF WE COULD ALL *PICK* OUR DREAMS, WE WOULDN'T HAVE ANY *NIGHTMARES*...

...AND THIS *PARTICULAR* NIGHTMARE, FOR ZATANNA, WAS ONLY JUST *BEGINNING*.

FORTUNATELY, ZATANNA'S A LITTLE *BETTER* EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH NIGHTMARES THAN MOST

ENIGNE RIAPER FLESTI.

*UN*FORTUNATELY, BRADLEY, THE JUGGLER, AND THE COCOA BUTTER *DIDN'T* JOIN HER FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP.

WHICH WAS ONLY SEVENTY MINUTES ANYWAY

THE LINE AT *CUSTOMS* WAS JUST *SLIGHTLY* SHORTER THAN THE *ENTIRE FLIGHT.*

2

BY THE TIME ZATANNA GOT BACK TO HER FAMILY HOME, *SHADOWCREST*, SHE WAS EITHER GOING TO *SLEEP* STRAIGHT THROUGH UNTIL HER NEXT BIRTHDAY

...OR GO ON A *KILLING SPREE* THE *JOKER* WOULD HAVE APPLAUDED

WITH HER *LAST* OUNCE OF SANITY, ZATANNA OPTED FOR THE *FORMER*

BOOF

BRADLEY, THE JUGGLER AND THE COCOA BUTTER HAD JUST EMERGED FROM THE *MISTS*...

SNRKK

NOTHING'S LESS FUN TO WAKE UP TO THAN A *DOOR-BELL* THAT PLAYS THE OLD '80S HIT "*ABRACADABRA*"

BUT IT SEEMED LIKE A *FUNNY* IDEA AT THE *TIME*

HER HEAD WAS SO *FUZZY* AND HER MOOD SO *BAD*, ZATANNA DIDN'T EVEN *WONDER* HOW ANYONE COULD HAVE GOTTEN PAST THE MANSION'S *MYSTIC WARDS*

...AND THAT'S WHEN HER NIGHT *REALLY* GOT INTERESTING

AND *NOT* IN A *GOOD* WAY

AH! YOU CAN ONLY BE *ZATANNA*, PREEMINENT SORCERESS AND A *LEGEND* AMONG ALL WHO STUDY, PRACTICE OR EVEN *DREAM* OF MAGIC!

TRULY, IN *ANY* LAND I HAVE TRAVELED, *HERE*, HOME IN *LIMBO TOWN*, OR *BEYOND*, YOUR BEAUTY IS *UNRIVALED!*

...

A *MARVELOUS* HOME! BEAUTY AS BEFITS BEAUTY! WONDERS AS BEFIT THE WONDROUS! SECRETS *UNIMAGINABLE!* THIS WILL BE A *FABULOUS* SCHOOL!

WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT...

MM?

DID YOU SAY *LIMBO TOWN?* THE SAME PLACE *KLARION THE WITCH BOY* IS FROM?

KLARION, DESCENDANT OF THE SURVIVORS OF THE *ROANOKE COLONY* AND NOTED *DOUBLE-TALKING MAGICAL HUSTLER?*

KLARION AND I SHARE THE SAME *HOMETOWN,* IT IS *TRUE,* BUT WE ARE NEITHER *KIN, COMRADES* OR EVEN *COLLEGIAL...*

...PARTICULARLY IF HE IS *NOT* SOMEONE WHOSE COMPANY YOU ENJOY.

I AM *URIAH* OF LIMBO TOWN. *CHARMED.*

AS, I WAGER, ARE *YOU.*

A... *FRIEND* OF MINE FROM *GOTHAM CITY* TOLD ME ABOUT YOU...

...YOU TRIED TO CREATE SOME KIND OF *ANIMAL DEMON-BEAST* TO DESTROY THE WHOLE TOWN BEFORE ROBIN AND KLARION STOPPED YOU.

OH, YES, I WAS *MUCH* MISGUIDED THEN...THE PRODUCT OF A *PECULIAR* RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING, TAUGHT PRINCIPLES THAT WERE *EASILY* OPEN TO MISINTER-PRETATION.

ON THE PATH OF THE *STRAIGHT* AND *NARROW*, I AM NOW. ON MY FRIENDLY, PINK *HEART* I DO PROMISE YOU.

AND MY PATH HAS BROUGHT ME TO *YOU.*

SDNAH NI EHT RIA.

WHOOP!

INSTEAD OF PAWING THE DECOR, SUPPOSE YOU JUST TELL ME *EXACTLY* WHY YOU'RE HERE, URIAH.

CERTAINLY. PERHAPS WE COULD DISCUSS THIS UNDER MORE *COMFORTABLE* CIRCUMSTANCES? SAY, DURING A *TOUR* OF YOUR IMPRESSIVE MANSION?

NO. TALK.

TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP

WHY, I'M HERE TO BECOME YOUR *STUDENT.*

TAP TAP TA—

RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN?

I WOULD, AND *GLADLY,* THOUGH MY CURRENT PHYSICAL SITUATION MAKES SUCH A DISCUSSION--

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT...

REWOL SDNAH.

MUCH BETTER. AS I WAS *SAYING,* TO *CONTINUE* MY PATH TO THE RIGHTEOUS WAY, I THOUGHT IT *BEST* TO SEEK TUTELAGE FROM SOMEONE KNOWN FOR HER *HONESTY* AND *VIRTUE.*

I AM HERE TO BE YOUR *APPRENTICE.*

FROM *YOU*, I INTEND TO LEARN *ALL* THINGS MAGIC, AND DO SO *PROPERLY*, THAT I MIGHT USE WHAT I LEARN TO *BETTER* THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND ME.

I SHALL LISTEN *RAPTLY* TO YOUR EVERY WORD. I WILL OBEY YOUR *EVERY* COMMAND. I WILL COME TO KNOW YOUR WISHES BY THE *TILT OF YOUR HEAD.* I SHALL LAY OUT YOUR *CLOTHES* AND MAKE YOU *TEA.*

TEACH ME, ZATANNA.

NOPE. SORRY. NOT LOOKING FOR APPRENTICES. BAD ECONOMY. I'LL KEEP YOUR NAME ON FILE.

NOW, IF YOU'LL *EXCUSE* ME, I REALLY NEED TO DO SOME MAGIC TO MAKE THESE *BAGS* UNDER MY EYES *DISAPPEAR,* SO--

EGNAHC SEHTOLC.

FFFFFFFFFUDGE!

OOH, PRETTY.

BUT NO.

FEH. STINKY.

...

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM, I'M *SURE.*

BUT *DEFINITELY* NOT *MINE.*

BOOKS. WHERE DOES SHE KEEP HER BOOKS?

IN A MONSTROSITY OF A STRUCTURE SUCH AS THIS, SURELY THERE MUST BE A LIBRARY...

LOOKS AS GOOD AS ANY OTHER...

OH, REALLY?

NOW LET'S SEE WHAT YOU WERE GUARDING SO--

--SO--

--SO *THIS* MUST BE THE LIBRARY...

URIAH! URIAH, COME OUT HERE!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MESSING WITH IN THIS HOUSE!

AW, HASSAN, YOU BIG DOPE...

URIAH, SERIOUSLY, IF YOU'RE IN THE LIBRARY, WE NEED TO GET YOU OUT RIGHT AWAY, FOR YOUR OWN GOOD AND EVERYONE ELSE'S!

THERE'RE TOO MANY THINGS IN HERE YOU'RE NOT TRAINED TO--

WELL, IF YOU'D AGREED TO TEACH ME, LIKE I ASKED, WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO GO THROUGH THIS, WOULD WE?

WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER, I SUPPOSE. I HAVE WHAT I CAME FOR, AND IT WAS ONLY THIS...

THE BOOK OF MAPS.

ALL THE KNOWN DIMENSIONS AND REALITIES, AND THE PASSAGES THROUGH AND BETWEEN THEM.

QUITE ENOUGH TO ALLOW ME ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES I'LL NEED TO CLAIM RULE OVER LIMBO TOWN.

AND AFTER THAT? WHO KNOWS WHAT I'LL DECIDE TO CLAIM RULE OVER..

OKAY, URIAH, LISTEN, YOU'VE GOT TO PUT THE BOOK DOWN.

OH, WHAT'S THE USE...?

KOOB YLF OT EM.

ZZZAAKKK

YEEEOWW!

I MAY NOT BE TRAINED BY A MASTER SUCH AS YOURSELF, ZATANNA, BUT EVEN I KNOW HOW TO CAST A LEASHING SPELL.

I THINK IT'S TIME TO TAKE THIS LITTLE BOOK FOR A TEST DRIVE.

THANK YOU FOR THE BOOK, ZATANNA. I SHALL TREASURE IT ALWAYS.

NO...

COME BACK HERE, LITTLE BRAT BLUE!

SHOOP

AND SO, BLEARY-EYED AND PUNCHY FROM LACK OF SLEEP, ZATANNA PURSUED A PSYCHOPATHIC, SOCIOPATHIC, ANACHRONISTIC WEIRDO KID...

...CARRYING ONE OF THE SEVEN OR EIGHT MOST IMPORTANT MAGICAL ITEMS IN ANY UNIVERSE...

LEPSID HSAEL LLEPS!

HA! YOU THINK I'D LEAVE MYSELF OPEN TO THAT?!

COMMAND-D

...ACROSS PARALLEL DIMENSIONS, ALTERNATE REALITIES, PASTS AND FUTURES, WHAT-COULD-HAVE-BEENS AND WHAT-MIGHT-BES

SHE DIDN'T THINK TO WORRY ABOUT GETTING *LOST* IN THE MAZE OF INTERLOCKING, INTER-CONNECTING MAYBE-SPACES. A VERY *REAL* [illegible]

WE ARE GETTING *VERY CLOSE* TO LIMBO TOWN, ZATANNA! I CAN FEEL IT DEEP *INSIDE* ME!

...SHE *MOSTLY* HOPED FOR THE CHANCE THAT SHE MIGHT GET TO *SPANK* THE *EYEBALLS* OUT OF THIS EDDIE HASKELL FROM HELL BEFORE HE DID *TOO* [illegible]

WHAT THE HELL--

NEXT STOP... *DESTINY!*

HOUSE [illegible]

...AND THAT SHE'D *FINALLY* REMEMBERED THE PROPER *INTONATION* FOR THE SPELL OF TELEPORTATION DURING INTERDIMENSIONAL TRAVEL

TROPELET SU OT EHT NOISNEMID FO SNAUTNAGRAG!

EEP!

BRRRRRRRRRR...

TROPELET SLI OT OBMIL NWOT.

HI. NICE *PLACE* YOU'VE GOT HERE.

I'LL COME *BACK* ON A *THREE-DAY WEEKEND.* BET I HAVE TO BOOK A HOTEL *MONTHS* IN ADVANCE.

YOU SHOULDN'T NEED THE STOCKS FOR *THIS* ONE... HE SHOULD BE OUT OF IT FOR A *COUPLE* OF CENTURIES.

PLEP

TROPELET EM OT TSERCWODAHS.

BY THE TIME ZATANNA GOT BACK *HOME*, SHE HAD ABOUT *TWO HOURS* 'TIL HER CALL FOR A SHOW IN *WASHINGTON, D.C.*

SLEEP WAS *POINTLESS*, REALLY, BUT LIKE A DOG WITH A BONE, ZATANNA WAS *DETERMINED*, IF ONLY ON *PRINCIPLE*.

IT'S *COOL*, HASSAN... JUST TRY NOT TO GET TAKEN BY SURPRISE *AGAIN*, OKAY?

SHE BARELY REMEMBERED *WHAT* SHE'D BEEN DREAMING ABOUT ON HER FLIGHT FROM FRANKFURT, SO LONG AGO, JUST THAT IT'D BEEN *GOOD*. BUT SHE DIDN'T REALLY *CARE*.

EGNAHC SEHTOLC.

ALL SHE CARED ABOUT WAS THE SWEET TOUCH OF *LINEN*, AND THE COOL BRUSH OF *PILLOW* AGAINST THE BACK OF HER HEAD

BUT THEN SHE TASTED *SEA AIR*, HEARD THE *ROAR* AND *CRASH* OF *WAVES* ON THE SHORE...

...AND SMELLED *COCOA BUTTER*, AND SHE SMILED AND SAID, IN HER SLEEP *AND* IN HER DREAM:

MRALA KCOLC OG OT LLEH.

THE D.C. TICKETHOLDERS WOULD JUST HAVE TO *LIVE* WITH IT.

GOOD NIGHT.

ZATANNA #1
Variant cover by Brian Bolland

ZATANNA #2
Variant cover by Brian Bolland

ZATANNA #4
Variant cover by Brian Bolland

ZATANNA #5
Variant cover by Brian Bolland

ZATANNA #6
Variant cover by Brian Bolland

EVEILEB NI CIGAM!

The enchanting Zatanna Zatara has the hottest stage act in Las Vegas. And unlike the parlor tricks peddled by other would-be Houdinis around town, Zatanna's magic is no illusion. It's real. The dazzling Mistress of Magic can warp reality with just a few backward words.

But the supernatural is powerful...and in the wrong hands, it's deadly. So, when mystical menaces start causing trouble, Zee steps in to stop them—from the evil sorcerer Brother Night to possessed puppets to nightmare demons. But things get complicated fast when the foe is the ghost of someone she loves!

Superstar writer **PAUL DINI** (*Batman: The Animated Series*) works his magic on this fan-favorite series, with the help of **ADAM BEECHEN** (**BATMAN BEYOND**), **JAMAL IGLE** (**SUPERGIRL**), **STÉPHANE ROUX** (**BATMAN BLACK AND WHITE**), **CHAD HARDIN** (**HARLEY QUINN**), **CLIFF CHIANG** (**WONDER WOMAN**) and more. Collects ZATANNA #1-16 and ZATANNA: EVERYDAY MAGIC.

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"